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ABSTRACT

The nature of adult economics education provided in the United Kingdom is outlined, and a framework within which it might be investigated is suggested. Androgogical learning principles are critically appraised and are compared and contrasted to pedagogical principles. An adult economics course model is developed, against which actual courses may be compared. A conclusion reviews procedures and makes suggestions for improvement. A survey on the extent of adult economics education is reported that pertains to adult education institutes, places of work, prisons, and informal settings. Suggestions are given for improvement in the teaching of economics classes for adults. A list of 80 references is appended. (APG)

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THE PROVISION OF ECONOMICS EDUCATION FOR ADULTS IN THE U.K. WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE LONDON AREA

by

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The Provision of Economics Education for Adults in the UK, with special reference to the London Area

by

L T FREEDMAN, BA (Econ) MA

Summary

After outlining the nature of adult economics education provision in the UK, Terry Freedman suggests a framework within which it might be investigated. He also critically appraises andragogical principles. He develops a model adult economics course, against which actual courses may be compared. A survey on the extent of adult economics education is reported, not only in Adult Education Institutes, but also at work, in prisons and in informal settings.

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Research Papers in Economics Education, University of London Institute of Education. Department of Economics, Geography and Business Education.

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1: Procedure

This study originated from an apparently simple question: what economics courses are provided for adults in London? However, in order to answer it, the question had to be broken down into several subsidiary questions:

What is adult education? By and large the term is taken to mean non-examinable "leisure" education, but the distinction between leisure and vocational adult education is becoming less easy to maintain in practice. Furthermore, the term "adult" itself may be defined in several ways.

What is economics education? It is not easy, in the absence of independently-set syllabuses, to determine from college prospectuses alone whether a course is truly an economics course or not. For example, a course entitled "The Third World" could just as well be political or historical as economics-oriented.

What is meant by "provision", and who are the providers? Economics is a subject which appears in various guises every day and for virtually every person. Is it conceivable that adults who were not enrolled in an economics course in a college might nevertheless be receiving economics education, for example at work?

Finally, what is meant by London? If it is defined purely by geographical boundaries, institutions such as the University of Surrey - within easy travelling distance from South London - would be automatically excluded.

No previous work (including previous research degrees in the UK) existed upon which the present research could be based. Therefore, in order to answer the above questions, ideas from several sources, including adult, economics, business and political education, had to be drawn together into a coherent framework.

The procedure may be seen in terms of two distinct, but related, processes. On the one hand there was the need to construct a theoretical model of adult education in general, and adult economics education in particular, within which the investigation could proceed. On the other hand, factual information had to be collected.

It would be useful to describe some of the difficulties involved in the fact-finding process in the hope that future researchers will avoid the "blind alleys" which caused delays in this investigation.

The attempt to discover which colleges and adult institutes in London provided economics courses for adults proved to be more difficult than had been anticipated. At first, it was hoped that the prospectuses from all institutions could be examined as a starting point. Unfortunately, it would appear that no single library in London houses all of them. Furthermore, the quality of the prospectuses which were examined, in terms of information provided, varied widely. Some gave generous space to course descriptions, while others simply stated the course title (and time and venue). The publication entitled "Floodlight" is extremely valuable, but only covers public sector colleges within the ILEA area and in any event is not comprehensive, as several courses appearing in college prospectuses did not appear in "Floodlight".

A new publication entitled "Inform" appeared in 1985, and is to London as a whole what "Floodlight" is to the ILEA area, with the additional advantage of citing private sector colleges also. Again, however, not all economics courses were mentioned in its pages.

Because of these difficulties, and because this method of obtaining information did not include community schools, the next stage of the investigation took a different approach. The individual LEAs were contacted with a view to learning which colleges or other institutions provided economics courses for adults. This provided the interesting (and frustrating) finding that several LEAs in London do not, in fact, know whether they provide economics education for adults. To put it another way, the administrative structure of adult and further education in some LEAs is such that no central list is kept as to what subjects are provided in which colleges. Nevertheless, LEAs were helpful in suggesting which institutions to contact for further information, and it was the contact with individual colleges which was, ultimately, the most fruitful action.

In retrospect, much time and energy would have been saved by adopting a two-stage approach in which a random sample of colleges was contacted to ascertain which of them provided economics education for adults. Then, a random sample of the ones which did could have been sent the questionnaire.

Information regarding informal adult education was very easy to gather. A number of institutions were sent a letter asking what economics education (if any) was made available to their members. The only institutions which failed, by and large, to reply (despite the inclusion of an SAE) were those concerned with helping the unemployed.

As far as the "scientific" value of the survey is concerned, there are two problems. First the colleges and informal institutions were not selected on the basis of random sampling, but according to which ones were recommended or which could be contacted. Second, although all of the AEIs in London were investigated, the results are only valid for the academic year 1985-6. Provision of particular courses in AEIs is much more dependent upon individual tutors and community needs than is the case in CFEs. Thus AEIs which provided no economics last year may indeed do so this year or next year, and the converse is also true.

The information on prisons was easier to obtain than might have been so had contact not already been made with a Prison Education Officer through a teaching commitment, since all matters concerning prisons are covered by the Official Secrets Act. The personal contact enabled the names of other prison education officers to be noted and this made the process of enquiry easier.

The questionnaire administered to CFEs and AEIs was originally intended to provide a basis from which interviewees could be selected. In the event, postal delays and non-response from prospective interviewees meant that only three interviews could be conducted.

2: Adult Education

This study is concerned for the most part with the provision of economics in "adult education" as traditionally defined, ie non-vocational education for persons over 18 years old, mainly part-time. However, it is difficult to maintain a clear-cut distinction in practice between this and alternative definitions. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to outline the various terms (describing adult education) currently in use, and to construct a framework in which economics education for adults may be viewed.

Adult education nowadays means much more than the old-fashioned "night school". This fact is illustrated not only by more imaginative forms of provision, but also by the plethora of terms in use. Legge (1982) provides a useful summary of the terms currently in vogue, these being continuing education, lifelong education and recurrent education. While these terms are not perfectly interchangeable, they all reflect the view that education is a continuing

process throughout life. This is not a new phenomenon but, as Wood (1982) points out, "it has clearly become a major issue in face of rapid technological transformations and accompanying social stress" (p.1). In other words, there is a growing recognition that school cannot, in the modern age, provide a youngster with all the skills necessary for the rest of his or her life.

Different countries have tended to favour different terminology. In Britain the term "continuing education" is the most popular, as reflected by the change in the title of the National Institute of Adult Education to the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education in 1983 and, previously, the establishment of the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education in 1977 as reported by, for example, Legge (1984). Although the terms "adult education" and "continuing education" are tautological in a legal sense, since both are subsumed under further education, practical differences are apparent. Thus adult education still tends to be regarded as a leisure-time pursuit, taking place in an adult education institute or similar institution, whereas continuing education also embraces in-service training courses, professional updating courses, day-release, Open University and so on, and may be work, home, or college based. Groombridge (1983) expresses this dichotomy rather succinctly in his suggestion that a distinction be drawn between "adult education", meaning non-vocational adult education, and "the education of adults", which would include industrial training courses, broadcasting, and so forth.

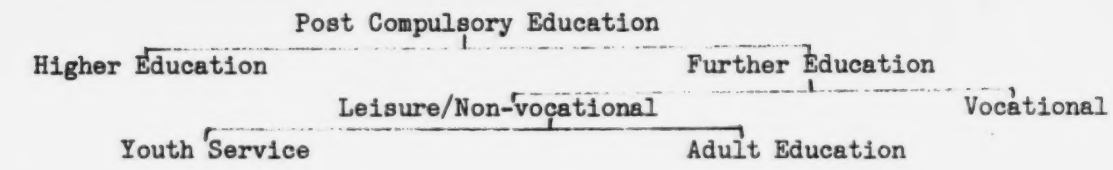
It has to be stated, however, that any distinction between vocational and non-vocational adult education ultimately hinges upon the intentions of the adult student himself. As the Russell Report (DES 1973) puts it: "... What makes a course of study vocational or not is the student's motive for taking it; if he takes it to qualify for a job it is vocational; if he takes it for the pure love of learning it is not, whatever the subject; and there will be relatively few courses that are composed wholly for one type or the other." (p.1). This observation is particularly important in respect of economics education for adults, as will become apparent further on.

The term "adult" is itself open to a number of interpretations. Unesco (1975) suggests the 15 plus age range, but this would be inappropriate for the UK where the school-leaving age is 16. Taking "adult" to mean over 18, the legal definition would exclude 16 year olds in AEIs, but include mature students in full-time higher education. "Post-compulsory" education would include all examination courses. The administrative definition of adult education is non-vocational adult education (Jennings, 1981).

Because of these difficulties, the approach used in the present study was a pragmatic one. The guiding definition was persons of 16 plus participating in education which is outside of the normal qualifications system of school, further education and higher education. This would theoretically include on-the-job training but exclude GCE evening classes. In practice, the resources were not available to investigate the former, but in some instances the latter had to be included (see below).

Adult education as traditionally defined is provided by two main groups, these being the Responsible Bodies (consisting of the Welsh National Council of YMCA's, university extra-mural departments and the WEA) and the local education authorities. In administrative terms, the provision of adult education may be contextualised in the following way:

The Administrative Context of Adult Education



(Adapted from Mee and Wiltshire, 1978)

However, as Atkinson (1985a) points out, this ignores a whole range of other providers of adult education such as the media, womens' institutes and so on. Atkinson (1985b) distinguishes between economics education at educational establishments, at work, and in the media. This differs from the framework adopted here in that the present one is more closely linked to adult educational theory.

The underlying framework of this investigation is informed by distinctions between what may be termed, perhaps somewhat clumsily, "formal", "non-formal" and "informal" education. Bowers and Fisher (1972) suggest that formal education be regarded as education for which the student is enrolled or registered, while non-formal education is that for which the student is not enrolled or registered (eg TV broadcasts). This is also the framework adopted by Unesco (1975). Groombridge (1983) takes the classification a stage further, defining formal education as that provided by the education and training system, non-formal education as that provided by enterprises outside the education system (eg trades unions) and informal education as social transactions.

It seemed appropriate that the investigation of economics education for adults should combine these definitions. Thus in the present study, formal education is education for which a student is enrolled or registered in an educational body (ie an organisation whose main aims are educational in the sense usually understood), non-formal education as education for which an individual is enrolled or registered with a non-educational body (eg the TUC), and informal education as education for which a student is not enrolled or registered (for an educational course).

In terms of this framework, institutions to be investigated may be classified as follows:

Formal Education

AEIs, CFEs, CHEs, community schools, WEA, NEC, Open University, etc.

Non-Formal Education

ITBs, TUC, work places, penal establishments, etc.

Informal Education

The media, women's institutes, working mens' clubs, etc.

In practice, there are links between these categories. Thus Jennings (1981) reports that in 1975 a scheme of trade union education was launched by the TUC, BBC, WEA and a CFE; in 1984 Yorkshire TV, Channel 4 TV, BTEC and CFEs co-operated on "Making Sense of Economics", based on the TV series "A Question of Economics". The links between the OU and the BBC may also be mentioned

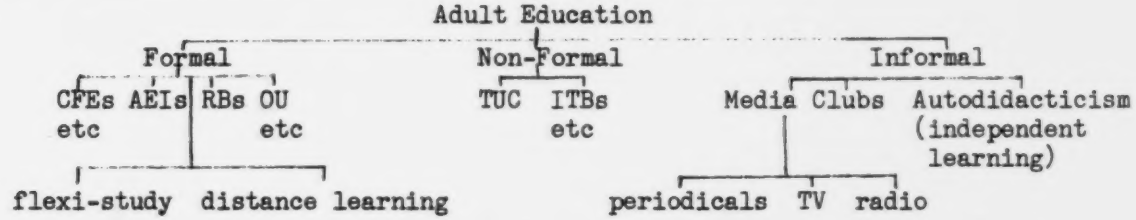
here. Informal links between a CFE or AEI and local groups may be extremely influential on the types of courses offered.

Links are also extant within categories, as in the Open College (1) arrangements documented by Lucas and Ward (1985). Also a number of courses provided by AEIs are university extra-mural courses: similarly, some WEA courses are run in conjunction with AEIs or the TUC.

The classification of independent learners, which has been dealt with at length by Brookfield (1980), would depend on whether or not they were enrolled in an institution. Strictly speaking, the description of correspondence tuition as independent learning is misleading according to Brookfield (ibid), and so this, together with flexi-study, is classified as formal education.

These sorts of overlaps between categories and institutions are not apparent from the framework as set out above. Nevertheless, it provides a useful starting point, and in this study examples from each category have been investigated. A diagrammatical representation of the framework is set out below:

Categorisation of Types of Adult Education Provision



This framework may be compared with that provided by Mee and Wiltshire (Op. cit). As a result of the classification criteria used, there is no explicit distinction between vocational and non-vocational adult education in the framework above.

The types of institutions and courses investigated are quite varied, reflecting the nature of adult education provision in the LEAs concerned. The 1944 Education Act does not identify adult education as a category separate from primary, secondary and further education, subsuming it under FE and stipulating its provision in rather vague, general terms as indicated by NIACE (1985). Consequently, both the nature and the extent of adult education provision varies greatly from one LEA to the next. Thus in the ILEA, adult education is to be found in AEIs and CFEs, while in other parts of London it is located mainly in community schools. At least one London LEA is in a state of transition from FE-based to community school-based adult education because of the perceived advantages of the latter (enumerated by Hughes, 1977).

Note

(1) An Open College is an arrangement between several colleges in an area whereby successful completion of a course in one college provides access for the "graduate" to a course in another college. For example, a recently established Open College is the Open College of Central and West London, which includes the Hammersmith & North Kensington AEI, Paddington College of FE and Hammersmith and West London College. This is a very exciting development which, to some extent at least, enables adults to circumvent the process of gaining GCE qualifications in order to attend a full-time degree programme.

With respect to non-examinable courses, the ILEA is by far the major provider in London. In several London boroughs, non-examinable courses are, in reality, examination courses which the student may follow without taking the examination. Although such courses have been investigated on the premise that if they are the only courses available for adults they constitute the authority's adult education provision, it is arguable that, in terms of the categorisation used above, they are not truly adult education courses at all. Such considerations as these are dealt with in the next section. (A comprehensive account of formal, non-formal and informal providers of adult education in London is given below).

So far, we have been concerned with providing a framework within which economics education for adults may be located in such a way as neither to exclude certain types of provision nor to confuse different types. In order to prepare the ground for the construction of a model of an adult economics course against which actual courses may be compared, it is necessary to examine some theoretical propositions about the nature of adult education, and then attempt to apply these specifically to economics.

As already implied in the previous section, the pace of technological change is such that much of the knowledge and many of the skills gained at school are unlikely to remain useful for the whole of an individual's life. Hence the need for continuing education. However, the provision of more education throughout a person's life is not enough. It is also necessary to take account of the learner. The mere transfer of information from a teacher to a student is not practical when knowledge - not only of "facts" but about how we interpret those facts - is changing so rapidly. When these changes occur, other changes follow - changes in attitudes, social relations and so on.

Largely as a result of the writings of Knowles (1970), a distinction is frequently made in the literature of adult education between the so-called pedagogical and andragogical modes of education. Whereas pedagogy literally means the teaching of boys, and is associated with the process of socializing the child under conditions of compulsory attendance, andragogy, according to Knowles (1970), means "the art and science of helping adults to learn" and is associated with voluntary attendance. The difference between the two terms in their emphasis on teaching and learning respectively is held by the proponents of andragogy to be an important one, and not merely a matter of semantics. The assumption that an adult needs to be helped to learn, rather than to be taught something, completely changes the relationship between teacher and student on the one hand and between teacher and subject matter on the other.

However, while Knowles (1970) distinguishes between the ways in which "children have traditionally been taught" and andragogical methods (see below), he fails to specify what these traditional methods are, or to acknowledge the fact that recommended approaches have changes in recent years. Moreover, helping someone to learn and teaching are not necessarily or self-evidently mutually exclusive. As Isaac Stern has stated, "A good teacher is someone who teaches you how to learn." Indeed, were the distinction between pedagogy and andragogy only concerned with teaching methods, one might well wonder why such a distinction needs to be made by inventing the term "andragogy", when existing terminology, such as "rote" and "meaningful" learning (Ausubel, 1968) serves the purpose equally well. However, the notion of andragogy also encompasses such aspects of the educational process as syllabus design and assessment. It would therefore be useful to outline the differences between pedagogy and andragogy as suggested by Knowles and other writers, to comment on these views, and to suggest, in the following chapter, ways in which the principles of andragogy might be applied to adult economics education.

Knowles (1970; 1978) maintains that andragogy is based on at least four assumptions about adult learners, each of which has implications for what may be called, in general terms, the educational experience. These assumptions concern four characteristics of the learner, which differ according to whether the learner is a child or an adult. These characteristics are self-concept, life experiences, readiness to learn and orientation towards learning. The assumptions about these will now be examined.

Self-concept

To the pedagogical model, learners see themselves as being dependent upon teachers to gain new information, whereas in the andragogical model, learners see themselves as independent and self-directed. In a sense, of course, no-one can be entirely independent of a teacher, for even an autodidact using books is dependent upon teachers (the authors), albeit at one remove. Thus the pedagogical and andragogical models represent the two extremes of a continuum rather than discrete models in themselves.

Life experiences

The pedagogical model makes little acknowledgement of the usefulness or relevance of the learner's life experiences to the subject matter in hand. In the andragogical model the learner's experience becomes an educational resource for further learning.

Readiness to learn

The pedagogical paradigm assumes that a learner is ready to learn a particular subject at a certain age. In andragogy the learner is ready to learn a particular subject when the need for such learning is perceived, whatever the learner's age.

Orientation towards learning

In pedagogy the learner is taught subject matter which is deemed to be useful in the future - subject matter which assists the socialization process by giving the learner access to the (dominant) culture. But as people mature they tend more and more to demand knowledge which is immediately applicable, and so the learner's "orientation towards learning shifts from one of subject-centredness to one of problem centredness." (Knowles, 1970).

This exposition is, of course, a simplification. For example, research in developmental psychology suggests that adults pass through a number of distinct phases (eg middle-age or "middlescence"), and that learner characteristics and needs change accordingly. Nevertheless, it represents a reasonably accurate summary of the views of Knowles, and so provides a basis for both critically commenting upon the views expressed and for exploring their implications.

A number of observations can be made. Knowles (1972) has stated that his views on adult learning were derived from a number of sources - primarily work in developmental and humanistic psychology as well as the works of such people as Dewey. Yet even if his understanding of the principles governing adult learning are accurate, it is not necessarily the case that adult education - or, indeed, any education - can be reduced to the psychological principles of learning. Moreover, such reductionism ignores the effects of previous socialization and other extrinsic fators such as the political system.

Unfortunately, little research has been undertaken by educationalists to determine whether the principles of andragogy hold in an educational context. But even if studies were to indicate that adults in adult education institutes learn best when their education is governed by andragogical principles, these conclusions may not be generally applicable because the sample may not be representative of the adult population as a whole, or even that part of the adult population actively engaged in learning. This is for three reasons:

First, adults who enrol on what may be called liberal adult education courses tend, as Rogers (1977) points out, to have a higher degree of education than those who don't. Secondly, adults who enrol on non-examinable courses, where there is a choice of doing so, probably are different from those who enrol on examinable courses. For example, they may have less need of external "approval", in which case it is a truism to say that they are self-directing (and therefore capable of self-assessment). Thirdly, there is evidence, cited by Rogers (1979) and Brookfield (1981), to suggest that adults who enrol in classes are a small proportion (between 10% and 20%) of adults who are actively engaged in learning, the majority preferring to make use of libraries and close associates (ie they are conducting their learning in what has previously been described as the informal education "system").

One may also question whether, in the context of economics education, adults' life experiences are a hindrance or a help. A cynical view might be that adults have had longer than children to develop and reinforce their misconceptions about economic matters! (See, for example, Thomas, 1983 and Rogers, 1979). If this were an accurate assessment, it would imply that, even if an adult learner has a psychological disposition towards self-directedness, the teacher would have to override this and assert what was best for the adult to learn, and how the degree of learning should be best assessed.

There is a more general criticism of the androgogical model. It is constantly being compared (favourably) to the pedagogical model as envisaged by Knowles and others. Yet in all probability the pedagogical model does not have its counterpart in practice, and one wonders whether it is legitimate to develop a model of learning (andragogy) by reference and in contrast to one (pedagogy) which does not exist. For example, is it true that childrens' experiences are deemed by teachers to be irrelevant?

Nevertheless, there are several reasons why it may be fruitful to attempt to construct an economics course based on andragogical principles. First, many of the doubts expressed above could be reduced by more research - in the classroom - concerning the efficacy of the andragogical approach. Secondly, virtually every article on teaching methods in adult education journals in the UK is based on andragogy, and it would be interesting to see how far these ideas have influenced economics courses. Thirdly, some of the implications of andragogical assumptions are worthy of further consideration. It is to these implications that we now turn.

If it is true that adults experience themselves as independent and self-directed, this implies that they are able to determine their own learning needs, and how far they have been satisfied or achieved. To reflect this, the course syllabus and assessment methods ought to be decided by negotiation between tutor and student, and the physical environment of the classroom should reinforce their equal status (such as by a horseshoe arrangement of chairs and desks rather than rows facing the tutor).

The fact that adults have greater, and different, life experiences from children suggests that teaching methods should make use of such activities as role play, case studies and so on rather than, say, lectures. Of course, this kind of educational approach is no different to that frequently advocated for school children, and perhaps, as Rogers (1977) suggests, "... the basis of learning is the same in children and adults: strong motivation and plenty of activity. The differences are ones of emphasis rather than fundamental principle". (p.58)

The assumption regarding readiness to learn implies the need to adapt the sequence of the course to the development of the learner rather than only the logic of the subject (even when there is general agreement on the latter).

If the assumption concerning orientation towards learning is true, courses need to be sequenced in such a way as to be immediately relevant to the learner. As Knowles (1970) says, "... the appropriate organizing principle is problem areas, not subjects," and courses should be person-centred rather than subject-centred.

Again, these considerations could apply to childrens' education as well as adults, and the evidence for the need for such teaching approaches with adults comes from research which was not framed in the andragogical paradigm. For example, research into short-term memory loss associated with ageing implies the need to bias class sessions towards active rather than verbal teaching methods.

Generally speaking, the most original and far-reaching implication of andragogy is that adults can be made responsible for their own learning, or, to put it another way, for the design of the process of education in the classroom. Thus they can contribute as equal partners with the tutor on syllabus design, choice of teaching methods, and assessment. The main aim of adult liberal education in the andragogical model is the independence of the learner. While this is an aim of other models, the andragogical model is radically different in its reappraisal of the roles of the tutor and student, for even what Stenhouse (1975) refers to as the "process model" of curriculum development does not go so far as to recommend the student's involvement in choice of subject matter to be learnt.

This particular aspect of andragogy, that of negotiation of a syllabus between students and tutor, has a practical as well as a theoretical basis. It is difficult enough to design a syllabus which is interesting and useful for a class of school children of mixed ability. How much more difficult it is to design a syllabus which appeals to everyone in a class which is not only mixed in terms of ability but also in terms of age, occupational background and other experience.

What is the role of the tutor who is regarded as a partner rather than a "dictator" by the students, vis-à-vis the subject? Logically, the tutor must give up the role of expert and adopt instead that of facilitator, helping the students to make progress according to their own criteria of what constitutes progress - having already helped them to develop these criteria.

In practice there are limits to how far these principles can be applied. It is probably true to say that most adults expect a certain style of teaching, and would find it difficult to cope in a situation in which a tutor took no decisions without first consulting the class. Certainly, adult learners cannot regard themselves as entirely independent and self-directed, or they would not have enrolled on a formal course of instruction. Thus a major, if not obvious, part of the tutor's job will be to affirm the learner's status as a person in order to boost self-confidence in learning.

Another constraint is imposed by the subject-matter itself. The tutor has a duty to teach, or help adults to learn, the organizing principles of the subject, where there is general agreement as to what these principles are. For example, in economics, concepts like opportunity cost and marginality would probably need to be taught. If not, one would need to enquire as to what model of economics, if any, was being taught.

It is therefore clear that there is a tension between the demands of the andragogical model, which emphasises the freedom and independence of the learner, and the demands of certain disciplines (such as economics), which lay down specific concepts or procedures. (It may be argued that economics contain different - and competing - paradigms. But it is still true that each alternative framework has its own internal consistency and concepts which need to be internalized by the student for learning to be said to have occurred). This tension may be resolved by a compromise solution whereby the students help to choose the content to be included in the course but not the concepts. Another approach, and perhaps one which is more in the spirit of the andragogical model, might be to explore the uses of the organizing principles and also the limits to their usefulness. In this sense, the tutor becomes a fellow learner - a little further along the way, perhaps, than the students, but not above them on a sort of pedestal.

3: Economics Education for Adults: A Theoretical Perspective

This section is concerned with the construction of an economics course for adults against which actual courses may be compared.

The Aims of Economics Education for Adults

The stated aims of many adult economics courses on offer in London, as appear in various prospectuses, tend to emphasise the understanding of economic issues in the media. At first sight, this seems promising, but does not fully stand up to scrutiny. This is both because economic issues in real life are often politically decided, and because the media do not always use economics terminology in the way an economist would. One may argue, as Whitehead (1977) does, that a course in politics might be just as effective. Perhaps, though, it is unwise to make any prejudgements on these courses, since a few lines in a college prospectus, in which space is extremely limited, can hardly be used as a basis for assessing their aims.

The type of economics courses often provided in schools, particularly the externally examined ones, do not provide a useful starting point for an economics course for adults. Many of the aims have little to do with economics, and those which do seem to fall short of "economic literacy" as currently understood in the UK. This is worrying when one considers that most adult economics education in London is 'O' or 'A' level-based.

It would seem logical that the most promising sources of aims for adult economics education are likely to be the discipline of economics itself and the principles of andragogy, taken together.

If we accept that the key concepts of economics are scarcity, choice, opportunity cost, efficiency and marginality, then the aim of an economics course might be to enable the student to learn how to use them, ie to develop an economics perspective. This idea is similar to previously cited aims of economics understanding or economics competence, except that many courses having such aims probably do not live up to them, since they appear to be content-centred rather than problem-centred. More recent comments on the aims of economics education have centred on the process of "doing" economics, ie of practising the economic perspective.

Hodkinson and Thomas (1984) formulate a procedure for engendering economic literacy in pupils which involves an ability to understand and to apply the economic perspective, and to be able to recognise the circumstances in which such application would be profitable. The framework is worth setting out in full:

"* Examine any marginal decision involving the use of scarce resources. Deduce whether the decision indicates that marginal benefits are greater than or equal to prices or money costs.

* Does it represent the best use of scarce resources? What does best mean?

* Are any costs other than money involved? Analyse the question in opportunity cost terms: 1. What returns are available from alternative uses of the resource? 2. What other resource use is involved as a result of the decision? 3. Are external/social costs present?

* Re-examine the choice behaviour. Consider benefits at the margin in relation to costs at the margin, noting the effect of value judgements.

* Does it represent the best use of scarce resources? What does best mean?

* Consider policy implications.

* Alternatively, start with a policy or advisory statement and work backwards, exposing the value judgements involved." (pp 7-8)

This framework satisfies the criterion of an aim of economics education being derived from the discipline of economics itself. But does it also satisfy the other criterion mentioned earlier, that of being in context with the principles of andragogy? Put simply, would this framework be applicable in the context of adult education?

It was suggested in section 2 that one of the main implications of the andragogical model was that a course should be problem-centred rather than subject-centred. The Hodkinson-Thomas framework clearly satisfied this criterion, since it is devoid of specific subject content apart from the key concepts of scarcity, opportunity cost marginality, and private vs social costs and benefits.

The framework would also enable a widely-professed aim of adult education to be put into effect, that of enhancing the student's ability to stand outside the social system and exercise critical thought, especially since the answers to the questions posed by the framework could be used to highlight competing economic paradigms.

In terms of particular contexts, the framework ought to be able to be used as a vehicle by students for understanding issues that are of interest to them. Casual investigation of one economics course suggests that adult students have a variety of aims concerning economics, including understanding economic issues reported in the media, being competent to distinguish between logical and fallacious argument in political speeches, and being able to understand economic issues relating to their employment. All of these aims could be realised if the student were economically literate. Thus, in conclusion, the aims of an adult economics course might be expressed as follows:

To enable the student to identify the economic aspects of problems, and to be able to correctly apply economic analysis to them. Also, to be able to perceive, understand and formulate different economic paradigms and suggest economic policies accordingly.

Implied in such a statement are other necessary skills, such as data-handling and ability to communicate economic arguments. The implications for course objectives are considered in the following section. It is interesting to note that there is no conflict between these aims for adult economic education and those for school students.

The Objectives of Economics Education for Adults

The distinction between aims and objectives here is that suggested by Taba (1963), who defines aims as broad statements of purpose while objectives are much more specific.

The behavioural objectives model yields little of interest or usefulness in the area of economics education. But there are other ways of specifying objectives. We may, for example, wish to frame objectives in terms of what the teacher does, or in terms of the subject matter.

One of the key points of andragogy is that adults are self-directed ie take responsibility for their own goals and means of achieving them. Translating this assumption into educational practice would normally be impractical if taken literally, because it would imply that the tutor would set no objectives and no syllabus, these being decided entirely by the students.

In practice, few adults are likely to be as autonomous as the andragogical model assumes. If this is the case, the andragogical model may be viewed as a picture of what the adult student could become, rather than is, and suggests an approach which involves some degree of negotiation between tutor and students about the objectives to be achieved.

It may be imagined that such negotiation is unnecessary, since the students would not have enrolled on the course had they not agreed with its general aims, as set out in the college prospectus. This view is untenable for two reasons. First, as previously mentioned, information about course aims is usually very sketchy in, and sometimes completely absent from, college prospectuses. Secondly, the students themselves will usually have their own ideas of the objectives they hope to achieve, and these may not necessarily coincide with the ideas of the tutor. The relationship between aims and objectives may be exemplified by reference to a hypothetical course, "The UK Economy". The aim of the course may be to understand the economic system of, and the problems facing, the UK. But the objectives of the course may vary from student to student and from students to tutor. Some students, for example, may place a high priority on understanding international trade. Others may wish to know about how financial institutions work, and their effect on the economy.

It would therefore be extremely difficult to set behavioural objectives in an adult course, even if they were felt to be desirable. It would make much more sense to employ what Stenhouse (1975) has termed the process model, which is more concerned with establishing procedures for learning than specific end results. Thus, statements of objectives are deliberately left open-ended, and may be more concerned with affective development than behavioural models usually are. The model emphasises the non-definitive nature of the learning goals of the class. This emphasis on method rather than results, or means rather than ends, is appropriate both for adult education, in which in liberal tradition the learner is (in principle) given encouragement in self-development, and for economics education, in which issues cannot often be categorically settled one way or the other, thereby underlying the need for the correct process of analysing economic problems.

Thus the appropriate objectives in this model concern the nature of the subject and the activities of the teacher, rather than the activities of the learner. The tutor's role is to provide situations in which the subject matter - in this case the economics framework described earlier - can be internalized by the learner. (The framework fits in particularly well with this model, since it represents a process of thinking rather than a set of hierarchically-ordered concepts (see Jeffreys, 1985; Thomas, 1985)).

Thus the tutor is more concerned with facilitating learning than in pursuing previously stated behavioural outcomes. This approach, incidentally, also allows for other outcomes, not able to be known in advance, to emerge.

Experiments with such a process model have been attempted in schools (eg the Humanities Project), but there are few documented cases of its application in adult education. In any event, one never knows how far a scheme of work would be simply used as a basis for teaching in a didactic rather than andragogical manner. As Rogers (1977) and Newman (1979) have pointed out, it is certainly apparently easier to teach didactically to adults, since many adults expect this approach and are uncertain of themselves when the tutor hands the responsibility for their learning over to THEM. Nevertheless, a commitment to the andragogical approach demands that adults are treated - as adults! This requires that the syllabus to be followed (ie content as well as objectives) should be decided by negotiation between the tutor and students.

The Content of an Adult Economics Course

From the foregoing it is clear that there is no "ideal" content for an adult economics course. In the first place, the framework outlined in the foregoing section is not content-specific, and therefore may be applied in a variety of contexts. In the second place, the content, like the objectives, needs to be decided by negotiation. Although it is not possible to stipulate the "ideal" content of an economics course, it should be possible to suggest themes and topics which might be of interest to adults, and which involve an economics perspective.

In order to do this, one should bear in mind both the type of student likely to enrol on a course and the nature of the catchment area. Generally speaking, students who attend adult education classes in academic subjects tend to have already been through more schooling and/or training than those who don't attend. According to Rogers (1977), however, this is not necessarily true for all adult students, and even those for whom it is true may never have studied economics before. This would suggest the need for courses which do not employ "technical" terminology except where unavoidable. It does not, however, suggest whether the course should be mainly concerned with microeconomics or macroeconomics.

The catchment area and the aims of the college or institute, and the aims of the LEA, will also need to be taken into account in practice. An area with a high ethnic element may demand an economics course which focuses on the problems of the 3rd World, or of particular countries. An area with high unemployment may require a business course rather than an economics course (eg "Starting Your Own Business"). Alternatively, students from a particular locality may be interested in a course concerning the economic aspects of the catchment area. In a sense, all of these options are equally acceptable as long as they give the student access to the economics perspective. These comments merely serve to emphasise the need to adapt the course content to local conditions and requirements.

The course content will also be influenced by the length of the course (in hours). Should a course lasting 50 hours contain twice as much material, or be twice as detailed, as a course lasting only 25 hours? One possible course outline would be 'A Question of Economcs', the book and television series by Peter Donaldson (For another suggested course outline, see the end of this section).

Teaching Methods

The content of a course is meaningless when looked at in isolation from other characteristics, such as teaching methods. In keeping with the principles of andragogy, the process model and the economics "framework", the teaching methods ought to encourage systematic enquiry. In order to bring out the principles of economics while keeping didactism to a minimum, classroom situations should be established in which problems can be tackled and discussed, and their economic aspects brought out.

Liggett (1985) identifies three areas of content, each of which implies different methods, or, at least, different degrees of emphasis along the continuum of teacher-centred to student-centred learning.

The first area is the transmission of substantive information. In the context of economics, this might be, say, the level of inflation in the UK in the last year for which statistics are available.

Secondly, there is the area of academic procedures - how does an economist approach a problem?

Thirdly, there is the opportunity to synthesise economics with other disciplines. This is necessary if it is true that adult students want knowledge which they can actually apply immediately, since economics cannot explain everything in the real world.

These areas obviously overlap in practice. Taking the example of inflation mentioned above, the tutor may wish to explore with the class what they understand inflation to mean. From this discussion can be brought out a definition which involves distinctions between real and money values. To bring the point home, visual aids can be introduced, such as the bank notes from Germany's hyperinflationary era; this may also stimulate discussion about the differences between inflation and hyperinflation.

The group may then wish to explore the economic aspects of inflation. A role play could be devised in which certain roles are featured, eg the borrower, who usually gains from inflation, and the lender who, other things being equal, loses. What advantages and disadvantages of inflation emerge from this, and what strategies do the players adopt, and why?

After this general introduction, the class may wish to know what the rate of inflation actually is. Here we are dealing with what appears to be straightforward factual information, but <u>are</u> we? The tutor may simply tell the groups what the RPI is, or they can find out for themselves. But then comes the more interesting exploration of how the RPI is calculated, with its attendant questions: is there just one rate of inflation for everybody? Are the poor under-represented?

Finally, what are the causes of inflation, and how might it be tackled? This will involve sociological and political, as well as economic, considerations. This is not to imply that the economics tutor must be a polymath, but s/he should be widely read in current affairs and able to encourage students to share with the class any relevant knowledge or experience they possess. The ability to help students see the relationship between economics and other social sciences does not need to involve great detail on these others, but rather an overall view.

Rogers (1977) presents a checklist of "do's and don't's" based on experience (hers and others') and psychological research. Thus lectures should be employed in short "bursts" of not more than 15 to 20 minutes, while case studies, role play, stimulation and games - all of which demand active student involvement - should comprise the greater part of the session.

Also, of course, audio-visual material may be employed. Radio and TV programmes can be useful in gaining access to information that might otherwise be hard to come by, or in gaining vicarious experience. These need to be used with consideration, however, if they are not to become mere substitutes for lectures. As Carr (1986) argues, "the watching of a video need not necessarily be a passive occupation, since by skilful interruptions, discussions, questions and follow-up work, the teacher can fully involve the students as well as, if not better than, in the conventional lesson" (p.2).

Video and audio programmes probably work better when they are specifically designed for the course, or where the course is structured around them, than otherwise, although the disadvantage with this is that the course content is decided for students rather than by them. Nevertheless, used judiciously, video can be a powerful stimulant to discussion.

Apparently trivial considerations such as the arrangement of furniture are rendered important in the context of adult education. Thus arranging desks in rows facing the tutor serves to emphasise the tutor's status as an expert, a person apart from the rest. (Even the relative sizes of the students' and tutor's desk can reinforce this).

Assessment

Given that the nature of economics education as set out here is to gain access to the economics perspective, and given our assumption that adults are interested in practical application rather than a set of "facts", assessment techniques need to be employed which gives the clients feedback on how they can improve rather than whether they are right or wrong. The problem facing the tutor is how to distinguish between personal growth, which cannot be objectively measured, (at least, not by the tutor unless he/she is a qualified psychologist!) and growth in understanding of the subject, which, in principle, can be.

A number of assessment techniques may be employed, such as written work, oral question and answer, performance in a role play and so on. The emphasis in each case should almost certainly be on involving students in their own assessment, and, possibly, peer group assessment. Adult tutors sometimes provide no assessment opportunities to their students. This is both dishonest, implying as it does the lack of need for assessment, and uneducational, since adults, like children, learn from feedback about how they are progressing and, like children, need encouragement.

The kind of assessments suggested are not "objective", but they should involve "public" criteria. Moreover, they should indicate to the students what they know or can do, rather than place them in an artificial - and irrelevant to their needs - rank order. The present "state of the art", however, renders it extremely difficult to state precisely what assessment techniques "ought" to be employed.

Bearing these principles in mind, the following is presented as a model against which actual adult economics courses may be compared. It is necessary to emphasise that it is not prescribed as being ideal.

Understanding the Economy

Course length: 50 hours (approx) (25 weekly evening sessions of 2 hours each, over 2 terms).

Aim

To give the student a good enough grasp of economic concepts and recent economic history to enable him or her to better understand current - and future - economic issues.

Subsidiary Aims

1. To understand: a) economic aspects of student's work, b) party political statements, and
2. To be able to engage in knowledgeable discussion with friends about economic issues.

Objectives and methods

To understand: a) How economists approach a problem, b) The relationships between economics and other social sciences, c) The effects of time lags, d) The effects of feedback.

By: a) Whole group discussion, b) Small group discussion, c) Role play, d) Computer simulations, e) Visiting speakers, f) Short lectures (by tutor and/or student), g) Individual assignments.

Content

(This comprises about 75% of the course. The remainder to be decided by negotiation).

1. Introduction: Accident! (Economics Association 14-16 Project), 2. Unemployment, 3. Inflation, 4. Britain's Overseas Trade, 5. Money, Banking and Public Spending, 6. Assessment of "Thatcherism", 7. Alternatives to "Thatcherism", 8. Income and Wealth in Britain, 9. The British Tax System, 10. The Welfare State, 11. Privatisation, 12. Industrial Relations in Britain, 13. Big Business, 14. The Multinationals, 15. The Third World, 16. The EEC, 17. Alternatives to Capitalism, 18. Britain's Future.

Assessment

1. Short tests (written) on economics content of newspaper articles (etc), 2. Performance in role plays, 3. Immediate feedback via computer simulations, 4. Preparation of short talks, 5. Short pieces of written work, 6. Oral question and answer. The emphasis to be on: a) criticism rather than grading, b) encouragement of self-assessment, c) immediate, or nearly immediate, feedback.

4: A Survey of Economics in Adult Education

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was intended to:

1. Reveal factual information about the type of economics courses available in adult education, eg length of course, content, etc.

2. Enable comparisons to be made between these courses and the model course suggested in the previous section.

3. Reveal whether adult economics education is run in accordance with andragogical principles.

4. Reveal information about the type of people who teach on the courses.

5. Enable conclusions to be drawn about the sort of questions which it would be profitable for future researchers in this field to ask.

An extensive search of the literature revealed no questionnaire specifically related to this topic. So the questionnaire employed in the present study was devised "from scratch".

Before going into specific detail, it would be useful to examine the guiding principles used in the construction of the questionnaire. At least four types of questions may be employed, these being:

1. Factual questions, eg personal information, course structure, etc.

2. Opinion and attitude questions, ie beliefs, feelings, ideas, etc. "Opinion" relates to specific issues while "attitude" refers to underlying personality characteristics.

3. Information questions, designed to find out what the respondent knows.

4. Behaviour questions, intended to discover what the respondent does.

Categories 2 and 3 do not feature on the questionnaire, except incidentally. Only one information question is featured, and that only incidentally. It appears in Q20 where tutors are asked how important certain economic concepts are in the course, and are asked to indicate if they are unaware of the meaning of some of the terms used. Consequently only categories 1 and 4 were employed.

Whether or not courses are run according to andragogical principles can be inferred from the answers to questions 12, 22, 24, 25, 27 and 28. However, where answers indicate that andragogical methods are preferred, they would, ideally, need to be checked by classroom visits (or interviews), since it is quite possible for didactic methods to enter, as it were, by the back door (see, for example, Hostler, 1982 and Rogers 1977). Incidentally, another item to be checked would be question Q13, since tutors are not averse to falsifying the register when numbers drop below a certain level in order to prevent the class from being closed down.

The categories for Q19 were derived from the aims of economics education as reported in relevant literature, the aims of the model course (see above) and the aims of AEIs. Those for Q20 were derived from the economics education literature.

While ambiguities have been avoided as far as possible, some remain. For example, in Q26 the term "available" is open to interpretation. Is a video recorder which is only usable between 19:30 and 20:00, as is the case in one AEI, to be considered "available"? Similarly, the term "consultation" in Q12 could have a range of meanings, but the opportunity cost of less ambiguity would have been less brevity. Some ambiguities became apparent in the pilot stage of the questionnaire. Thus it became obvious that the term "adult" could be interpreted as 16, 18 or 21 plus, depending upon the institution and the course being followed. Moreover, tutors often ran a number of courses which were similar to each other but attended by different types of students. For these reasons, an addenda notice was attached to the questionnaire, defining "adult" and giving tutors discretion to choose for themselves the courses on which to base their answers to the questionnaire.

One "mistake" remained uncorrected until quite late in the day, however. This was the statement, both on the covering letter and in the introduction to the questionnaire, that the research was concerned with non-examinable courses. As it became clear that many institutions run only examinable courses, it became apparent that one reason for non-response may have been a feeling on the part of recipients that their answers would be irrelevant. This was corrected for sending out reminders to the effect that the scope of the study had been widened to include examinable courses. Also, some questionnaires were sent out with the words "non-examinable" erased, and some with a postscript to the covering letter explaining that examinable courses were a matter of interest.

5: The Questionnaire: The Provision of Economics Courses for Adults
(Answers based on model course outlined above).

This questionnaire is part of a research project being carried out for an MA dissertation at the University of London Institute of Education. The purpose of the research is to discover what non-examinable courses in economics are provided for adults (primarily in London), the characteristics of such courses, and the reasons for their provision. Your co-operation will be of great value in extending our knowledge in these areas.

It would be most helpful if you could return the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided by _____

Section A

1. Name _____ (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)

2. Post _____

3. Title of course Understanding the Economy

4. Name of organisation in which course is taught _____

5. Type of organisation in which course is taught (please tick one)

(a)	Adult Education Institute	x
(b)	Technical College	
(c)	College of Further Education	
(d)	Responsible Body	
(e)	Other (please specify)	

6. Is your course run in conjunction with, or under the auspices of, another organisation (eg the NEC, University of London etc)?

(a)	Yes (please specify	
(b)	No	x

7. Is the course

(a) full-time?	
(b) part-time? (please tick one)	x

8. If the course is part-time is it

(a) a daytime	
or (b) an evening course?	x

9. Length of course (please tick one):

(a) Less than 6 weeks		
(b) Six weeks to one term		
(c) Two terms	x	or
(d) Three terms	x	
(e) Other (please specify)		

10. Length of individual sessions (please tick one):

(a) 1½ hours	
(b) 2 hours	x
(c) 2½ hours	
(d) 3 hours	
(e) Other (please specify)	

11. Frequency of sessions:

(a) weekly	x
(b) daily	
(c) Other (please specify)	

12. Which of the following statements most accurately describes the method by which the course syllabus was devised? (please tick one)

The syllabus was devised ...

(a) independently of either tutor or students	
(b) entirely by the tutor	
(c) entirely by the students	
(d) by consultation between tutor and students	x
(e) other (please specify)	

13. How many people regularly attend your course? ____

14. How many of these are:

(a) male?	
and (b) female?	

15. Which three occupations are represented most often by your students?

(a) _____ (b) _____

(c) _____

16. Which of the following statements most accurately describes the theoretical content of the course? (please tick one)

(a) The course is mainly concerned with describing the workings of economic institutions, with a minimum of economic theory.	
(b) The course is highly theoretical with occasional use of real world data.	
(c) Economic theory is used as a means of explaining real world phenomena, and is presented in non-technical terms as far as possible.	x
(d) Economic theory is used as a means of explaining real world phenomena, and is presented in technical terms as far as possible	

(e) Other (please explain) _____

_____

17. Is your course concerned mainly with

(a) micro-economics	
(b) macro-economics	x
or (c) micro- and macro-economics in roughly equal amounts	

18. Which ONE of the following features most prominently in the course:

(a) OECD countries	
(b) Centrally Planned Economics	
(c) Western Europe	
(d) Eastern Europe	
(e) Newly Industrialised Countries	
(f) The Third World	
(g) The United Kingdom	x
(h) All countries	

19. How important are each of the following objectives in your course:

(On this and similar questions, 7 = Very Important and 1 = Of No Importance)

	Very important 7	6	5	4	3	2	Of no importance 1
(a) To enable student to:							
i) understand the workings of economies	x						
ii) gain access to a higher-level course						x	
iii) understand particular economic issues		x					
iv) understand matters concerning his/her occupation				x			
v) understand coverage of economic matters in the media	x						
vi) understand the sociological reasons for economic events or behaviour			x				
vii) understand the political reasons for economic events or behaviour			x				
viii) understand social sciences generally			x				
ix) gain study skills						x	
x) gain compensation for lack of earlier education						x	
xi) gain self-confidence			x				
xii) update his/her knowledge of economic events	x						
(b) To encourage student to become actively involved (eg political activity) (please specify): Reading journals like the "Economist"; participating in discussion groups, etc.	x						

20. How important are each of the following concepts in the course?

"If you are unaware of the meaning of any term, please tick the appropriate box on the left."

	Very important 7	6	5	4	3	2	Of no importance 1
(a) The price mechanism			x				
(b) The fallacy of composition		x					
(c) Allocative efficiency	x						
(d) Exogenous and endogenous variables			x				
(e) Interdependence of variables		x					
(f) Causes & effects of income distribution				x			
(g) Specialisation				x			
(h) Marginality	x						
(i) Monetary & fiscal policy		x					
(j) Opportunity cost	x						

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
(k) Short-run & Long-run		x					
(l) Social costs & benefits	x						

21. Please list the main topics or subject areas covered in the course. Alternatively, you may prefer to attach a copy of your syllabus/work scheme to the questionnaire. See Section 3.

(a) _____ (k) _____
(b) _____ (l) _____
(c) _____ (m) _____
(d) _____ (n) _____
(e) _____ (o) _____
(f) _____ (p) _____
(g) _____ (q) _____
(h) _____ (r) _____
(i) _____ (s) _____
(j) _____ (t) _____

22. What behavioural skills, if any, do you expect students to acquire by the end of the course?

(a) (Most important)	
(b) To be able to apply the economics	
(c) framework described in Section 3.	
(d)	
(e)	

23. How often do you formally assess students' understanding:

(a) At the end of each topic	
(b) At the end of each term	
(c) At the end of the course	
(d) Never	
(e) Other (please specify): As appropriate	x

24. How important are each of the following assessment methods in your course?

	Very important 7	6	5	4	3	2	Of no importance 1
(a) multiple choice tests							x
(b) essays					x		
(c) role play/simulations				x			
(d) data-response questions				x			
(e) oral questions	x						

25. Which of the following approaches do you use most often? (please tick one)

(a) lecture lasting for whole session	
(b) lecture followed by question & answer session	
(c) introductory talk followed by student activities	x
(d) other (please explain)	

_____
_____

26. To what extent do you use the following AVA in the classroom*:
(7=Always and 1=Never)

	Always 7	6	5	4	3	2	Never 1
☐ (a) video			x				
☐ (b) tape recordings		x					
☐ (c) slide/sound							x
☐ (d) slides only							x
☐ (e) 16 mm films						x	
☐ (f) filmstrips							x
☐ (g) computers			x				
☐ (h) overhead projector		x					
☐ (i) other (please specify): Posters/Display material				x			

*NB If any equipment is not usually available for use, please tick appropriate box in left hand column.

27. How important are each of the following teaching methods in your course?

	Very important 7	6	5	4	3	2	Of no importance 1
(a) small group work	x						
(b) role-play	x						
(c) computer simulations			x				
(d) student-prepared papers			x				
(e) lecturing						x	
(f) whole group discussion	x						
(g) visiting speakers		x					
(h) educational visits			x				
(i) homework assignments		x					
(j) case studies		x					

28. Which of the following arrangement of desks do you use most often?
(please tick one)
(NB: If the desks are affixed to the floor, please tick this box ☐)

(a) A square	
(b) A horseshoe	x
(c) Rows	
(d) Other (please specify)	

Section B

In order to enable me to classify your answers, and to make statistical comparisons, it would be most helpful if you would answer the following questions:

1. Is Economics your main subject?

(a) Yes	x
(b) No	

2. What are your qualifications?

Dip.Ed	B.Ed	B.A./Sc	PGCE	Dip.Ad.Ed	M.A./Sc	Ph.D	Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)
				x			

3. What is your full-time occupation? (If a teacher, please state level eg. school, polytechnic etc.)

25

4. If you teach full-time, how long has this been your occupation?

(a) Less than 1 year	
(b) 1-5 years	
(c) 6-10 years	
(d) 11-15 years	
(e) Over 15 years	

5. How many years have you been teaching adults?

(a) Less than 1 year	
(b) 1-5 years	
(c) 6-10 years	
(d) 11-15 years	
(e) Over 15 years	

6. During the past 5 years, how many in-service training courses have you been on in connection with:

(a) Adult education	
(b) Economics education	
(c) Other (please specify):	
Total number of courses	

7. How did you obtain your present adult education post? (please tick one)

(a) By approaching the institution with your own ideas	
(b) By being approached by the institution	
(c) By applying for an advertised post	
(d) Other (please specify):	

8. Which of the following age-groups do you fall into?

(a) 21-30	
(b) 31-40	
(c) 41-50	
(d) Over 50	

9. Additional comments: _____

Please return the completed questionnaire in the SAE provided.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

(NB: Please enclose syllabus if applicable).

6: Formal Economics Education for Adults

Of the small proportion of adults who attend evening classes, a tiny percentage attend economics classes. Indeed, "cognitive" courses other than language courses represent less than 6% of all LEA courses (according to Mee and Wiltshire, 1978 who used their own criteria). Even at university extra-mural level, economics courses account for less than 2% of all courses, the lion's share being taken by the University of London, which runs about a fifth of all such courses in the UK, according to the UCACE Annual Report 1982-3.

Adult Education in London: An Overall View

Education in London is administered by 21 LEAs, containing 64 adult education institutes (sometimes known by a slightly different name such as adult education centre), 77 colleges of further or higher education and colleges of technology, and a number of other institutions such as art colleges and community centres (Longman, 1985). In addition, there are several colleges, polytechnics and tutorial agencies in the private sector.

The overall figures cited above disguise large discrepancies between LEAs, both in the extent of provision and its form. Thus some have no AEIs at all, adult education being provided in CFEs or Community Schools (or both). Others have an extensive adult education service with centres used solely for adult education. In some areas, school buildings are used as AEIs at night time, while in others the AEI occupies, say, the top floor of a school and is in operation during the day as well as the evening. There are also a number of purpose-built establishments, notably the City Literary Institute, which are aided (and thereby enjoy a great deal of autonomy).

The administration of adult education also differs between various LEAs. In some, provision is centralised in the sense that the LEA knows exactly what is being provided, and where. In others, adult education is mainly the responsibility of individual institutions, which provide courses of their own choosing within the LEA's stipulations.

The private sector was found to contain four types of college: correspondence colleges, CFEs and polytechnics, tutorial colleges, and specialised institutions. In this respect, London is similar to the country as a whole, according to the findings of Blamire (1985) and Williams (1979). A preliminary exploration indicated that only two (specialised) institutions could be regarded as coming within the scope of the present study, the remainder being very much concerned with examinations.

Mainly for this reason, a detailed investigation of the private sector was not undertaken - but this is not the only reason. According to Williams (1979), the private sector is characterised by "a constant flux ... with institutions closing down and new ones opening". Thus a great deal of time could be spent gathering information on institutions which turn out to be short-lived. Furthermore, it is often difficult, without actually visiting the college concerned, to determine whether it is genuine rather than a diploma mill (Jones, 1986) - although given more time one could focus on those colleges which submitted themselves to voluntary inspection and accreditation. A rough estimate would suggest that there are about a dozen private colleges in London which teach economics, and six accredited correspondence colleges.

Survey and Results

Very few of the institutions in London provided non-examinable courses in economics, and so this was compensated for by widening the survey to include other LEAs and examinable courses (Business Studies, extra-mural and GCE courses) and "narrow" courses which focussed on only one area (eg the Stock Exchange).

The selection of courses was based on information contained in college prospectuses and, where there were several possibilities, the discretion of the respondent. Some courses containing economics, such as "Return to Study" and "Access" courses, were omitted from the investigation because of insufficient time and lack of LEA permission. About two thirds of the courses investigated were provided in London, the remainder being provided in Leicestershire, Bedfordshire and other metropolitan areas.

One hundred and eleven questionnaires were sent out, and 69 replies were received. Of these, 3 merely provided the information that the course had not actually started (usually through insufficient enrolments). Thus 66 usuable replies were received, giving an effective response rate of just under 59%. Although this was a good response rate for a postal questionnaire, the actual number was felt to be too small to justify sophisticated statistical analysis. Therefore, the information from the questionnaires was gleaned by inspection. In addition, the non-random nature of the sample makes it difficult to say how representative it was of all adult economics classes. For these reasons the survey should perhaps be regarded as providing possible avenues of investigation for future researchers rather than any definite information in itself.

The single most important venue for courses was AEIs, followed closely by CFEs. Community schools were not, on the whole, important in this respect, but the situation may be very different within the next decade, as LEAs take advantage of the economies of scale which community school based adult education affords.

A surprisingly large number of courses were run under the auspices of another body such as the WEA, TUC or a university extra-mural department - surprisingly because in many cases there was no indication of this co-operation in the college prospectus. Nevertheless, most courses were run by the AEI itself, independently of any other organisation in a formal sense. Perhaps it should be noted, however, that informal links are often more important than formal ones, and that these would not necessarily have been acknowledged in the questionnaire responses.

Most of the courses were part-time day or evening courses, thereby corresponding to the model course outlined earlier. But whereas the model course specified a duration of two or three terms, most of the courses investigated ran for only a term or less. The effect of this was, apparently, on content rather than aims or objectives, the shorter courses tending to concentrate on "broad" issues such as monetarism, and the larger ones exploring specific economic problems.

The average length of individual sessions was 2 to 2·5 hours, meeting weekly, while the average number of participants was 12, more or less equally divided between male and female.

By and large, syllabuses were devised independently of either tutor or students. This was because of the inclusion of examinable courses. Of the non-examinable courses, one or two were devised entirely by the tutor, but most were devised by consultation between tutor and students, which accords with the model course.

There seemed to be no relationship between the type of course and the sex composition of the participants, which varied from course to course according to no discernible pattern. The occupations of the students did bear a relation to the nature of the course to some extent: Business Studies and GCE courses seemed to attract more people in the professions. But housewives and the unemployed were represented in all types of courses. It would be interesting to learn whether their participation was prompted by the desire to enter or re-enter employment, or by the desire for leisure activity (or both). A small-scale study of one non-examinable economics course revealed that participants had enrolled for a variety of reasons: mainly to gain a greater understanding of world economic affairs, plus more personal reasons such as the economic aspects of their own occupation (either procedural, such as pay claims, or substantive, such as their role in the economy) and intellectual stimulation. But it would require a much wider survey to determine the generality of these reasons, and this was outside the scope of the present study, which is concerned with provision of, rather than participation in, adult economics education.

So far we have been concerned primarily with factual information much of which (though not all) could be obtained from prospectuses. We now consider the education, as opposed to the administrative, aspects of the courses surveyed.

There are two ways in which the results of the survey might be described. The first would be to consider separately the aims and objectives, course content, teaching methods, assessment, and tutor qualifications across the whole range of courses. For example, one could compare the teaching methods employed on GCE courses with those used on non-examinable courses. The second method of presentation would be to examine all of these criteria for one course type before moving on to the next. Because this second method enables us both to see each type of course in its totality and to compare it with the model course, it has been adopted here. However, the results are subsequently summarised in the form of a matrix to enable both forms of comparison to be made. (See Table 1).

The questionnaire suggested 13 possible course objectives, and rank orders were derived from the responses. Only the top 4 and bottom 2 are considered here. Because these objectives were expressed in rather broad terms, they are referred to in this analysis as "aims".

Non-examinable courses

In the model economics course, the most important aims of a non-examinable course for adults are regarded as to enable students to: understand the workings of economies; understand coverage of economic matters in the media; update their knowledge of economic events; and be encouraged to read (with understanding), journals such as "The Economist".

An ability to succeed in these respects would indicate a degree of economic literacy (although measurement of this attainment would be problematic), as long as the teaching methods used encouraged students to "do" economics rather than just read about or listen to it. Thus in reviewing the aims and objectives of economics courses we must also consider the methods employed. As a rule of thumb, group work and discussion is assumed to be more likely to encourage the development of economic literacy in students than lecturing.

At the other end of the scale, the least important aims of a non-examinable course are held to be: access to a higher-level course; to gain study skills; and to gain compensation for lack of earlier education.

It is not that such aims are unimportant, but they are not derived from economics as a discipline and therefore there is no intrinsic reason for them to be part of the raison-d'être of an economics course. If they are given a higher priority in some of the courses examined here than in the model course, it will be because of factors which are extrinsic to economics, such as the conditions laid down by the college and the educational characteristics of students - or what the tutor supposes their educational characteristics to be: in very few CFEs or AEIs are students interviewed prior to the course to establish the students' needs, educational achievement, suitability of the course etc (A notable exception is the City Lit). It may be that non-economics aims are legitimate from an andragogical point of view, but they would not be unique to an economics course. In the model course adopted as a yardstick here, andragogy informs aspects of the course other than aims and objectives, by and large.

The four most important aims of the non-examinable courses surveyed were to enable students to: understand the workings of economies; understand particular economic issues; understand coverage of economic events in the media; and gain compensation for lack of earlier education. Thus the first three correspond very clearly to those of the model economics course. The two least important aims were: to enable the student to gain access to a higher-level course; and to encourage the student to become actively involved.

Only the first of these corresponds to the specifications of the model course. That study skills were not accorded the lowest priority is not surprising in view of the fact that the institutions concerned encourage the development of study skills in all "academic" subjects. Moreover, tutors themselves would not regard study skills as unimportant, especially in regard to learning how to study economics.

"Active involvement" was accorded a higher priority in courses with a practical slant, such as personal investment, suggesting that this was interpreted by tutors as doing something more than taking an active interest in economics. On the other hand, "compensation for lack of earlier education", which was given the lowest priority in the model course, was regarded favourably by many tutors - and not only those teaching non-examinable courses. This is surprising in view of the fact that many people who attend "academic" adult education classes are better educated than those who don't (Rogers 1977), unless we are to interpret this response as "compensation for lack of earlier ECONOMICS education". Whether or not this interpretation is valid, the reported aims of non-examinable economics courses were among the most economics-orientated of all the courses looked at.

Interestingly, this impression of a high degree of "economics-orientation" was not confirmed by responses to Q22, concerning behavioural skills. Only one respondent mentioned "economics" and that in the context of seeing the relationship between politics and economics. No-one suggested, for example, an ability to apply economic theory to real world problems. Most replies suggested skills which were not specific to economics, eg listening, logical thinking, essay-writing and so on.

The majority of the courses was concerned with macroeconomics, focussing on the UK, with economic theory being presented in non-technical terms in most cases, although a significant minority of courses were descriptive and contained a minimum amount of theory. The individual topics or themes comprising the course content were issues such as employment, inflation and so on. It is interesting to note that some courses followed "A Question of Economics", as it were unofficially. One course was solely concerned with money and monetarism, and was designated by the tutor as microeconomics.

Although most tutors negotiated the syllabus with their students, it is not known how far course content reflects tutors' preferences or students' needs.

The most important concepts in these courses were: monetary and fiscal policy; social costs and benefits; causes and effects of income distribution; and opportunity costs, while the least important were: exogenous and endogenous variables; and the fallacy of composition. Thus on the face of it it seems that not many tutors agree with Jeffreys (1985) about the key concepts of economics. (Indeed, this observation is true of <u>all</u> the courses surveyed).

The teaching methods employed on these courses were mostly discussion-based, the teaching time being broken down into a short talk or lecture followed by discussion or a question-and-answer session. It was disappointing, however, that small group work ranked only third in importance, after (in descending order) whole group discussion and lecturing. It may be, however, that a group consisting of only nine or ten students was felt to be small enough to conduct useful discussion without the need for dividing into smaller groups. But "discussion" can be interpreted in a number of ways; in one session attended as a follow-up to the questionnaire, the "discussion" took the form of a series of dialogues between individual students and the tutor, despite the chairs being arranged in the shape of a horseshoe.

Most tutors did not make much use of AVA despite their availability in most AEIs and colleges. Where they did, the OHP was the most popular, followed by video. 16 mm films were used by no-one, perhaps because of the belief, in the words of one respondent, that they "have been superseded by video".

There was no overall pattern concerning the timing of assessment, some tutors conducting assessments at the end of each topic and, at the other extreme, some never doing so at all.

The most popular form of assessment was oral questions and the least popular was multiple-choice questions. In descending order of preference, the types of assessment used were: oral questions; essays; data-response questions; role play/simulations; and multiple choice questions. An interesting aspect of the evidence on methods and assessment is that they seem to be rather formal. It is as though tutors make concessions to the principles of andragogy by discussing the syllabus with students and arranging the chairs in a certain way, but draw back from experimenting with more innovative teaching methods and less traditional assessment methods. This may be because of students' - and tutors' - expectation about the role and style of the tutor, which are often based on one's own experience in school. It is unlikely to be the result of inexperience, since most tutors had been teaching adults for over 5 years. It may reflect a lack of in-service training, since few tutors had attended such courses in the last 5 years.

Most tutors in these non-examinable courses had a degree in economics and a teaching certificate. A small number possessed higher degrees, including a doctorate. Half of the tutors obtained their present adult education post by applying to the institution with their own ideas, implying the flexibility one would expect of AEIs. (This does, however, have the disadvantage that if the tutor leaves, the course, being his or her "creation", is disbanded. This is less likely to happen in, for instance, GCE courses).

The non-examinable courses in specific topics, such as the Stock Exchange, differed in almost every respect from both the model course and the courses just examined. In just under half of the cases the course had been devised by the tutor alone, and the aims were almost wholly non-economics in nature. The four most important aims were, in brief: active involvement; understanding economics in the media; sociological reasons for economic behaviour; self confidence, while the least important were: understanding social sciences generally; matters relating to students' occupations. In general "active involvement" referred to buying stocks and shares.

The behavioural skills expected of students were no different from any of the other courses looked at, and were to do with analysis, interpretation and displaying self-confidence. This would seem to suggest that tutors are either unwilling or unable to specify the behavioural skills they expect their students to display by the end of the course. This has implications for assessment (see conclusions, below).

Most of the courses in this category were descriptive, and were concerned with macroeconomics in the UK. The most important concepts were considered by tutors to be: monetary and fiscal policy; exogenous and endogenous variables; causes and effects of income distribution; and interdependence of variables, while the least important were: allocative efficiency; and the fallacy of composition (the meaning of which was unknown by many tutors).

But these findings were strongly influenced by the inclusion of some courses in current affairs. The majority of courses in that particular category regarded ALL economic concepts as unimportant with the exception of the price mechanism. Even here, it is not known how far the tutors' understanding of the price mechanism coincided with that of economics teachers, since none of them was qualified in economics (see below).

The teaching methods, too, were very different from those used on other courses. The individual sessions consisted of a lecture followed by questions and answers or discussion. Case studies were used in some classes, but small group work was used very infrequently in spite of the fact that the average class size was about 13 students. Role play, computer simulations and student-prepared papers were never used.

The most frequently used AVA were slides and newspaper cuttings, followed by 16 mm films and, far less often, video.

Formal assessment was only given in one case, the most popular form of assessment being oral questions.

As stated earlier, none of the tutors of these courses was qualified to teach economics. Indeed, none had a teaching qualification at all. Half of the tutors had academic qualifications, but none was a full-time teacher or lecturer, and for the most part described themselves as "consultants" or stockbrokers.

It would seem that these courses were less inclined to be run in accordance with andragogical principles than the non-examinable economics courses. The courses which were most didactic were the ones concerning investment, perhaps because there is little room for debating principles. Whatever the reasons, these "narrow" courses failed to meet the criteria of the model course either in terms of economics or andragogy.

Examinable Courses

The most important examinable courses from our point of view are the GCE courses, since these are often the only ones available for adults wishing to study economics.

Somewhat surprisingly, the aims of these courses were not entirely specific to economics: understanding economic matters in the media; the workings of economies; gaining study skills; and gaining compensation for lack of earlier education.

Although the first two aims are concerned with economics, a high priority is accorded to non-economic aims. Indeed, compensation for lack of earlier education does not even appear as one of the aims of 'O' level or 'A' level syllabuses. (See, for example, Wall, 1984).

The least important aims are: updating knowledge of economic events; and active involvement. Interestingly enough, the aim of self-confidence was given a higher priority at 'O' level, and access to a higher-level course (eg 'A' level?) a lower priority than at 'A' level. At 'A' level, access to a higher-level course was deemed to be quite important, as was the understanding of economic issues. It is odd, therefore, that "updating" was given such a low priority. Several factors may account for these apparent inconsistencies. It may be that, where adults who wish to study economics have no alternative to taking an 'O' level course, with no intention of going on to 'A' level, 'O' level tutors are responding quite consistently. 'A' level tutors, who usually have only one academic year to complete the course, may feel it their duty to teach the "basics", leaving it to their students to keep abreast of developments themselves. These are questions which could probably best be answered by interviewing the tutors concerned.

Turning now to the behavioural skills which students are expected to develop, we again find almost no examples which are economics-specific. They are stated as "problem-solving ability" and "objectivity" or "scepticism". Such amorphous "skills" must be almost impossible to assess! An interesting aspect of this and other features of GCE courses is how far the tutor's own ideas about the course seem to influence the course itself, despite the fact that the syllabus is devised, and attainment ultimately assessed, with no direct involvement of tutors or students.

Most courses followed syllabuses of the Associated Examining Board, the remainder used the University of London Board. Most tutors presented economic theory in technical terms as far as possible, and it is interesting to note that only one tutor regarded the 'O' level syllabus as descriptive. As expected, micro and macroeconomics were taught in roughly equal amounts - although one 'A' level course dealt with the"microeconomics foundations of macroeconomics", an interesting departure from the norm.

Tutors regarded the most important concepts as: the price mechanism and opportunity cost; monetary and fiscal policy; allocative efficiency, marginality, and social costs/benefits, while the least important were: exogenous and endogenous variables; the fallacy of composition.

This pattern is very similar to that suggested in the model course, but it is unclear whether tutors believe these concepts to be the most/least important for attaining some degree of economic literacy or for passing an economics examination; at present one doubts whether the two are synonomous.

The most frequently used teaching methods were: homework assignments, lecturing, whole group discussion, case studies.

The least frequently used were: computer simulations, and role play.

In other words, on the face of it, it seems that lessons in these GCE classes are very teacher-centred. This impression is reinforced somewhat by the fact that the most used AVA was the OHP. Other AVA, such as videos, were hardly ever used.

Assessment was undertaken frequently - usually at the end of each topic - and took the form of: data-response questions and essays; oral questions; and multiple choice questions.

It is interesting that multiple choice questions are hardly used, considering that both 'A' and 'O' level papers on the AEB syllabus, and the 'A' level paper on the London syllabus, feature multiple choice question papers. It may be that the administration of such tests would take up too much of a two-hour session. Another interesting discovery was that one or two tutors occasionally use role play as a vehicle for assessment.

The tutors on GCE courses were well-qualified, and were employed as teachers full-time (usually in colleges). Most had been teaching for over 10 years. Some had been on INSET courses in economics education, but only one of the respondents had been on INSET courses in adult education.

On the whole, andragogical principles do not appear to have been adhered to on these courses. In view of the teacher-centred approach used, it is difficult to see how the aims of self-confidence could easily have been achieved.

The university extra-mural courses are worthy of separate investigation. Being outside the usual LEA provision, they may be seen as comparable to courses run by the WEA. Indeed, both the WEA and extra-mural departments of universities are classified as Responsible Bodies.

In terms of overall aims, the most important one is to gain access to a higher-level course. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the courses, which have no formal entry requirements, lead (or can lead) to a Diploma in Economics which exempts students "both from the formal university entrance requirements and the examinations for Part 1 of the BSc (Econ) for External Students". (University of London, undated). The remaining high priority aims are: understanding the workings of economies; understanding particular economic issues; understanding economics in the media. The least important are: "updating knowledge of economic events" (perhaps for reasons suggested earlier) and "active involvement".

Behavioural skills were specified in economics-related terminology, but were still rather vague, eg "a grasp of economic principles" - although "ability to evaluate different economic systems" was more encouraging. On the whole, as with the other courses, statements such as "analytical skills" characterised the majority of responses to this question.

The content varies from course to course. An interesting feature of the "Modern Economy" course is that it has a thematic structure, and deals with the development of the international economy, modern capitalism, socialist economies and the third world. Apart from this and "Economic Principles", courses tend to be specific to certain areas eg "Econometrics"; "Managerial Economics". The questionnaire responses indicated that micro as well as macroeconomic issues are dealt with, and the exposition is rather technical in nature.

The course aspects considered so far would suggest that the type of adult who is attracted to these courses is rather different from the usual kind of AEI student. While the Courses may be taken for their own sake without an examination, they are primarily intended for students seeking an alternative route to a Bachelor's degree. Thus the type and level of exposition is more

technical, and more detailed, than would be found in most adult economics courses. The occupations of the participants confirm the suggestion that students on these courses differ from those on other courses: they were drawn primarily from the ranks of middle management, and most of the remainder were full-time students elsewhere. This contrasts with occupations of students in other courses, in that other courses attracted fewer full-time students and a larger number of unemployed, and clerical occupations.

The teaching methods also confirm these impressions, with lecturing, whole group discussion and student-prepared papers being the most important, with virtually no use of AVA (these being largely unavailable) except for the OHP, and students sitting in rows. Thus andragogical principles do not seem to inform these courses.

The most important concepts are: the price mechanism; monetary and fiscal policy; causes and effects of income distribution; and opportunity cost.

Like the teaching methods, these also differ from the model course, in which opportunity cost was accorded a higher priority (along with other, associated concepts, eg marginality).

Assessment, as might be expected, is formal and takes the form of essays (although students do not have to take the final examination if they do not with to gain the Diploma).

In terms of qualification, there were more PhDs and more university and polytechnic lecturers amongst extra mural staff than in any other type of course.

Business Studies Courses

Although these were examinable, they shared many of the characteristics of the non-examinable economics courses (including content, especially where "A Question of Economics" provided the basis for the course). The main difference between these two types of courses appeared to be that Business Studies syllabuses were more often devised independently of either tutors or students. The extent of the similarities is such, however, that little is to be gained by a separate and prolonged examination of Business Studies courses.

Conclusions

The survey has indicated that the economic concepts which are cited in the literature as being most important for an understanding of the subject are not necessarily those which tutors would believe to be so. However, few of the respondents were able to suggest economics-specific skills which their students might be expected to acquire by the end of the course. One wonders how students could be assessed in the absence of such criteria. Even though courses may not be designed from a behaviourist standpoint - and the lack of clarity in specifying behavioural skills suggests that they are not - the only way to assess students is by comparing their behaviour with pre-specified standards. The absence of these could be attributable to one of three factors: (a) the use of the term "behavioural" misled tutors into believing that the question presupposed a behaviourist approach which may not have applied to them; (b) standards of achievement were set for individual students rather than for the class as a whole. This would be consistent with andragogical principles, which hold that students are able, or should be encouraged to, set their own standards; or (c) tutors really had not fully thought out what the standards should be.

The courses which come closest to the model course are the non-examinable economics courses (as expected) and, perhaps surprisingly, Business Studies courses.

The most important influence on whether a course is run in accordance with andragogical principles could well be the type of institution in which it is taught, since the least didactic courses were taught in AEIs. This should not surprise us. AEIs, being free from the pressure of being seen to maintain standards by the criterion of examination results, can afford to depart from the tried and tested methods of conveying information from tutors to students. Indeed, were they to use the same type of approach, it would be difficult to justify the existence of economics courses in AEIs which used similar methods to those in CFEs but with "nothing to show for it" at the end. Furthermore, the types and expectations of students who attend AEIs probably differ from those who attend CFEs (where there is such a choice of institution) - they either expect to be taught less didactically or, if the methods do not suit them, they "drop out" although there will of course be exceptions.

Nevertheless, even AEIs appear to lack total commitment to andragogical principles. This may be because the tutors questioned were not familiar with them - very few had taken advantage of adult education INSET courses provided by LEAs. Alternatively, it may be that there are conflicts between the demands of andragogy in general and economics education in particular.

Table 1 summarises the main features of the courses surveyed.

Table 1: Summary of objectives, concepts, methods and assessment in public sector institutions' courses (most important/most used only)

	COURSES AND RANKING OF ITEMS				
ITEMS (AND QUESTION NUMBERS)	A	B	C	D	E
OBJECTIVES (Q19)					
1. Understand the workings of economies	1	3	2	1	
2. Gain access to a higher-level course				2	
3. Understand particular economic issues	2	1		3	
4. Understand economics in the media	3	2	1	4	2
5. Gain study skills			3		3
6. Gain compensation for lack of earlier education	4	4	4		
7. Update knowledge of economic events					4
8. Encourage active involvement					1
CONCEPTS (Q20)					
1. Price mechanism		2	1	1	
2. Efficiency			4		
3. Interdependence		3			
4. Income distribution	3	4		3	3
5. Monetary and Fiscal Policy	1	1	3	2	1
6. Opportunity cost	4		2	4	4
7. Externalities	2				2

COURSES AND RANKING OF ITEMS

ITEMS (AND QUESTION NUMBERS)	A	B	C	D	E
AVA (Q26)					
1. Video	2	2	3		
2. Slides	3				2
3. 16 mm films					3
4. Computers		3	2		
5. OHP	1	1	1	1	
6. Other					1
METHODS (Q27)					
1. Small group discussion	3	2			4
2. Student papers	4			3	
3. Lectures	2		2	1	2
4. Whole group discussion	1	1	3	2	1
5. Visiting speaker		4		4	
6. Homework assignments		3	1		
7. Case studies			4		3
ASSESSMENT (Q24)					
1. Essays	2	1	2	2	
2. Data-response questions	3	3	1	3	2
3. Oral questions	1	2	3	1	1

KEY

COURSES

A: Non-examinable economics courses
B: Business studies courses
C: GCE 'O' and 'A' level courses
D: University extra-mural courses
E: Non-examinable courses in specific subjects (eg 3rd World)

RANKINGS

Only the most important categories have been included. Within these, 1 = most important.

As stated above, most institutions in the private sector cater for students intending to take examinations. As far as could be determined, only two provided non-examinable courses in economics.

Students may be full-time or part-time at the examination colleges, and many opt for private rather than public sector provision for a variety of reasons listed by Williams (1979) including its perceived superior status or because the students are not British citizens.

Individual subject syllabuses are devised independently of tutor and student but, as in the public sector, the curriculum followed by individual (full-time) students is a matter for discussion between the parties concerned.

Teaching methods tend to be lectures and individual tuition. Few seem to encourage small group work or role play although, of course, individual tutors may. Indeed, at least one college specifically forbids tutors to do anything in lessons which is not directly instrumental in delivering information - including student exercises or essays during class-tutor contact times.

The picture may be better from an educational (in the wider sense of the term) viewpoint in some colleges or in some subject areas. Nevertheless, the general impression is that most of the colleges derive their raison-d'être from their success in preparing students for specific examinations.

Tutorial agencies, of which there are several in London, serve to match individuals requiring private tuition in a particular subject with a tutor qualified to teach that subject. Tuition, usually in one-hour periods, takes place in the student's home or, occasionally, in the tutor's home. Most people who avail themselves of this service are studying for GCE 'O' or 'A' level or, less frequently, first year university level economics.

Perhaps because inspection in the private sector is voluntary, standards between colleges and tutorial agencies can vary widely, and not least in the area of recruitment. For example, most tutorial agencies never meet the tutors they use (not "employ", since the tutors are self-employed), and almost certainly rarely check on their qualifications or experience. Nevertheless, there are a number of colleges and agencies who are highly efficient and successful in terms of achieving their aims.

Of the two colleges which provided non-examinable courses in economics, one completed the questionnaire, gave an interview and allowed observation of a lesson and access to students. The other failed to return the questionnaire.

The college investigated is a registered charity and runs several courses at either "Basic" or "Advanced" level. Included in the basic courses are general principles and classical theory, while the advanced courses include more specific subject areas such as taxation theory and "Ten Great Economists". Advanced courses cannot be taken until all of the basic courses have been taken; the student "graduates" from the basic to the advanced level by completion of courses, not by examination passes. All courses run for ten weeks, meeting weekly for two hours in the evening, and are devised by consultation between tutors.

One course in particular was investigated, a basic course concerned with economic principles. The most important aims of this course were to enable the student to: understand the workings of economics; understand particular economic issues; understand economic events in the media; and update knowledge of economic THEORY. The least important aims were those of direct personal concern to the students, such as occupation, self-confidence, study skills and so on.

Course content spanned both micro and macroeconomics, and focussed specifically on the UK, although other countries were dealt with where appropriate. Although the course was "billed" as economic principles, and had the aims cited above, the content was skewed towards returns to the factors of production land and labour, and the distribution of wealth.

The chief concepts emphasised by the course were: interdependence of variables; the price mechanism; and the short-run and long-run.

Each session was based on a reading assignment set the previous week. The format of each session was as follows: (a) discussion of reading assignment; (b) question sheet for answering orally; (c) answer sheet to supplement (b); (d) new reading assignment for next session.

All materials are prepared by tutors and approved by "committee". Although individual tutors may occasionally use newspaper cuttings, the materials (and procedure) seem to leave little room for individual initiative or spontaneity on the part of the tutor.

In the session visited, the "discussion" was, in effect, a series of dialogues between the tutor and individual students (although the tutor said that this was atypical - perhaps influenced by the presence of an observer). Nevertheless, the quality of students' questions was high, and compared very favourably to those asked by students on other (public sector) courses. The students had evidently "done their homework", despite the fact that formal assessment was not a feature of the course. The high quality of the materials may have been a factor here.

The quality of the teaching, while unimaginative, was high, the tutor being very familiar with the subject matter.

Tutors, who are unpaid, are drawn from the ranks of past students who have taken all the courses and undergone a period of "on-the-job" training. Formal qualifications are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for working as a tutor. The reasons for becoming a tutor were said to be enjoyment and commitment to the educational work of the institution.

It was unclear why the students had opted to study in this particular institution rather than at an AEI. The reasons they gave, such as wanting to know more about economics, were no different from those which might be expected from AEI students, and suggested that they had not considered AEIs. It may be, of course, that their LEAs did not provide adult economics education in AEIs, in which case private sector enrolment may have suited them better than enrolment in a public sector CFE.

An interesting aspect of the course is that while it was very much concerned with economics, andragogical principles - in particular regarding syllabus design and assessment - appeared to be lacking. This reinforces the possibility that the principles of andragogy and of economics education are to some extent mutually exclusive.

The other private sector college which provides non-examinable courses has been investigated by Hounam and Hogg (1984). Their thesis is that the economics (and philosophy) classes run by the college are in reality vehicles for the espousal of a quasi-religious doctrine and for recruitment of new "disciples".

Open Learning

This section would be incomplete without a note on open learning. This enables students to study without the need to physically attend an educational institution. But it goes further than the more traditional correspondence learning in that other media, such as radio, TV, video, audio cassettes etc may be used in addition to specially-written texts, and flexible meeting arrangements are possible. For example, Devon Open Tech has a network of tutors whom students on courses can phone to arrange private tuition as part of their course.

Open learning in the UK was pioneered by the establishment of the Open University (OU), which provided a means of acquiring academic knowledge and qualifications for those who would otherwise find it difficult to do so. The NEC, by producing its own materials, working with CFEs and seeking collaboration with television companies, went much further than the ordinary correspondence college in providing distance education. More recently, the last few years have seen an introduction of, and expansion of, "Open Tech" schemes, which are concerned primarily with training in specific fields, especially for adults (both employed and unemployed).

Open learning systems represent an attempt to reach people who "are handicapped by domestic ties, work commitments, the lack or unsuitability of local courses, transport limitations or a simple lack of confidence in dealing with the conventional education system". (Richards, 1986 P.22) The last point made by Richards is quite important, as it recognises the fact that distance and domestic circumstances are not the only considerations. Brookfield (1978), for example, has described how a scheme of "directed independent study" in Hereford and Worcester attracted mostly students from urban areas which did, in fact, provide locally-based classes. He concludes from this that: "correspondence education should not be conceptualised as a mode of instruction suited only to areas of scattered population; it might be more useful to view it as a method of teaching particularly well-suited to certain temperaments, rather than a medium which is employed only for geographical reasons". (p.20)

The possibility that open learning methods may be more suitable than other methods to certain temperaments is probably not the reason for their growing popularity, especially in the field of training. A more likely reason is the financial advantages to companies, as explained in the Conference Programme of "Spring Open 86", which maintains that the flexibility of open learning methods "... enables training to be undertaken as soon as it is needed and with minimum interruption to production. Learning is concentrated upon essentials and money is saved on travel and subsistence". (MSC 1986, p.1) Open learning or its predecessor, correspondence learning, is not, of course, confined to London or any other geographical location. Nevertheless, because of its importance it will be dealt with briefly as it pertains to economics education.

According to Marguerite Lowe of the CACC, there are about 500,000 students studying by correspondence with accredited correspondence colleges (which include the NEC), although not all of them are studying economics. About a dozen colleges in London which are accredited by the CACC or are members of the ABCC - or both - offer economics tuition for GCE and professional courses (such as the Institute of Bankers). The NEC also offers preparation for OU courses. Generally speaking, correspondence learning does not lend itself to consultation between the college and its students as to syllabus design and assessment.

The OU (which defines adults as "18 plus") offers several economics courses, or courses which contain elements of economics. One of these courses, a second level full credit course entitled "Introduction to Economics" was investigated by questionnaire, the results of which are described below. The approach of this course was changed in 1986 to reflect the fact that there is no longer consensus amongst economists (if there ever was) regarding the causes of booms and slumps, and as a result of new insights into the nature of monetarism and the recent economic crisis. According to information provided by D N Gallon of the OU, competing theories are now presented more explicitly rather than through a historical perspective. Thus, according to "OU Undergraduate Courses 1986": "Four themes run through the course. First, the dynamic nature of economies, and the problem of how economies adjust to change. Second, the international character of economic activity. Third, the respective roles of planning and markets in the economy and fourth, throughout all this, the relationship between economic theory and policy". (OU 1985, pp 25-26).

In addition to written marerials and television and radio broadcasts, OU students may meet once a month for a tutorial with other students and a tutor. One of these groups was the subject of the questionnaire. It had been hoped to survey other such groups, but permission to do so was not granted.

There were twenty students in the group investigated, of whom twelve were female. The three occupations most represented were businessmen and women, teachers and housewives. The sessions last for 1·5 hours in the evening (the course itself lasts from February to October).

The aims of the course were said by the tutor to be to enable the students to: understand the workings of economies; understand particular economic issues; understand coverage of economic events in the media; update knowledge; gain compensation for lack of earlier education.

Interestingly, an important aim of the course according to the OU itself is to enable the student to take further, more specialised courses, yet the tutor who completed the questionnaire felt that the aim of enabling students to gain access to a higher-level course was relatively unimportant. This may, however, reflect the aspirations of the students in his particular group. The least important aim was to enable students to understand matters relating to their occupations. The behavioural skills expected of students were, as in other cases, expressed in non-economics language. In this case they were described simply as "analytical abilities" and "descriptive skills".

The content, briefly touched upon earlier, is concerned with both micro and macroeconomics as applied to the UK, and includes such topics as growth and recession, the economics of the firm, economic problems and alternative economic systems. The least important concepts were the price mechanism and exogenous and endogenous variables, the remainder being regarded equally as quite important.

The teaching methods in the tutorial group consisted mainly of discussion of the course material and students' difficulties, and feedback on assessment. (The course material just mentioned consists of one television programme and four audio cassettes, together with the OU course book and recommended reading). Whole group discussion, homework assignments and case studies were very important but role-play, visiting speakers and educational visits were of no importance.

There are 8 tutor marked assignments (TMAs), making essays the most important type of assessment. Data-response questions were also fairly important, but continuous self-assessment was said to be an integral part of the course. Assessment is undertaken at the end of each block of work. 50% of the marks can be obtained from the TMAs, and 50% from the final examination. (The course may be taken by associate students as a non-examinable subject, in which case no credit towards a degree would be granted).

As found in other courses looked at, the OU expresses its aims in economic terms, but does not completely abide by andragogical principles. The course team responsible for the unit in question seeks feedback from tutors and students about course content, but this is likely to affect the syllabus only in the long-term. In any particular year, it is presented to students (and tutors) as a fait accompli. Although self-assessment is important, it is the students' marks on the TMAs and the final examination which, in the last analysis, determines their attainment.

The NEC's course "Making Sense of Economics", based on Peter Donaldson's "A Question of Economics", was also examined. Run in conjunction with BTEC, it is a flexi-study course which is offered by CFEs and supported by NEC written material and videos. The examples investigated were, for the most

part, offered as a component of Business Studies courses, and in this context have been dealt with above. There was little to distinguish this course from many non-examinable courses, except for the greater use of video. Perhaps the most interesting aspect was that the number of colleges co-operating with BTEC and the NEC in providing the course was very much smaller in practice than the "official" list (provided by Yorkshire TV) suggested. This was mainly due to lack of student response at local level. Of course, several schools and colleges have used the videos without necessarily running the actual course (see Carr, 1986), and individuals will have watched the original broadcasts.

The type of economics education available to an adult living in London, or even whether any is available at all, depends on factors which are beyond the individual's immediate control. The LEA's interpretation of its duties in the sphere of adult education in general, and its financial priorities, will to a large extent determine the structure and scope of its adult education service. There appears also to be a substantial non-rational (or not obviously rational) element in the different relationships between FE and adult education which exist in otherwise similar boroughs. Where AEI-based economics education is available, the only check on the quality of the course is often the level of attendance (although inspections are sometimes carried out). Overall, the choice between different types of courses is severely limited, and most London adults will not be given the opportunity to study an economics course specifically designed for adults.

There are, however, opportunities to acquire economics understanding by less formal means, and these are the subject of the next section.

7: Nonformal and Informal Economics Education

Nonformal education is that for which a student is enrolled or registered in a non-educational establishment, while informal education is that for which a person is not enrolled or registered at all.

In practice there is some overlap between these types of provision, either in respect of the providing agency or of the participants. For example, the CBI runs conferences (non-formal education) and publishes "CBI News" (informal education), indicating that the same agency - the CBI - is engaged in both types of provision. It is likely, also, that conference delegates keep themselves abreast of current developments to some extent by reading "CBI News"; a similar overlap of participation is likely to be found in any organisation which runs courses and publishes (in-house) journals, or in particular "circles", occupational or otherwise. Moreover, there are likely to be what might be called "dynamic" connections between nonformal and informal education, in that participation in one could generate participation in the other. For example, conference delegates will often exchange information in the course of social interaction outside formal sessions. This would be an example of nonformal education leading to informal education. An example of the reverse process would be where a delegate, during informal breaks, learnt about another conference which he or she subsequently attended. In these respects the distinction between non-formal and informal education, and formal education also to a certain extent, is more convenient than real - a fact which is explicitly recognised by open learning arrangements.

One other aspect of non-formal and informal education needs to be mentioned. Except in one or two instances it is difficult to confine the investigation to a particular location - in this case London. Conferences, for example, attract delegates from all parts of the country and even from overseas. But where possible, the study focusses primarily on the London area.

Non-formal economics education

Two areas of provision have been investigated, work and penal institutions. Each of these will be considered in turn. Generally speaking there are, potentially, important relationships between work and the education of adults. Working adults may attend evening classes in a work-related field, have on-the-job training or attend day or block release classes and, through social interactions at work and in-house journals, participate in informal education.

Because there was not the time available to investigate individual companies, a broader approach was adopted by which it was hoped to gain an impression of the prevailing situation in this area. The main institutions studied were: the TUC; the CBSI; the BIM; and the CBI.

The TUC has its own education department which provides courses on economics and related topics and original materials such as student study notes. Legge (1982) reports that most TUC courses are organised on a day-release basis and are intended to cover the subjects required by shop stewards in their capacity as worker representatives. The present study found that this was indeed the case with economics education. The courses provided were as follows:

Table 2: Courses with economics content offered by the TUC

Course	Duration	FT/PT(DR)
1. Work study, productivity & pay	10-12 weeks	PT
2. Economic awareness	As above	PT
3. Bargaining information	As above	PT
4. Pensions	(2 days or	FT
5. Short courses	(1 week residential	FT
6. Trade unions and the economy	1 week residential	FT

Sources: TUC Education Office and TUC (1984a)
Notes: DR Day Release; FT Full time; PT Part time.

In addition, courses on industrial relations are run at CFEs in co-operation with the TUC, and using TUC materials. Most of these courses are directed towards workplace representatives, but courses on pensions are intended for pension trustees as well.

The most general of these courses is "Trade unions and the economy", which is concerned with current economic theory, alternative strategies, and the role of the public sector and investment. ("Current economic theory" may include such topics as monetarism and privatisation). In this course, as in others, concepts such as opportunity costs are only introduced when they are considered "relevant". "Economic awareness" is, despite its title, a course which appears to be concerned with analysing "economic" information obtained from representatives' employers. This may include such topics as investment and pricing policies, and manpower policies (eg employment and wage levels). The "short courses" are usually based on the key points of the TUC's "Economic Review".

A questionnaire was sent to the TUC Education Department concerning the six courses enumerated above, and one was sent to a CFE concerning a TUC-based course in industrial relations. According to the former, both economics understanding and personal development are the most important aims, but responses to other items on the questionnaire taken together with the questionnaire response of the latter suggest that the overriding aim concerns the enhancement of negotiating/bargaining ability on the part of shop stewards. The TUC regarded ALL the economic concepts cited on the questionnaire as "not relevant", a standpoint which is borne out by Evans (1986), who maintains that TUC courses are deficient as far as economic content is concerned -

"courses do not even cover basic supply and demand analysis", and in any event "10 days is too short" - especially considering that many trade union officials eventually find themselves in positions of high economic responsibility, eg on hospital finance boards.

The materials provided by the TUC, (for example TUC, 1984b; TUC, 1981), are well-researched and laid out, and are intended for use in small group work, role play and discussion. A visit to a CFE provided an opportunity to see a "typical" class in action, although not on an economics course. That particular session was concerned with case study material based on previously received factual information. Discussion was very limited, but it is doubtful whether the session was representative of the course as a whole.

Generally speaking, the TUC has developed a student-centred approach which even encompasses the layout of tables. Yet the economics content of the courses leaves much to be desired. This is not unique to TUC-based courses. Very little in the way of general economics understanding is provided either to shop stewards or to supervisors. The courses are instrumental in the sense that they are limited in content to what is deemed to be "relevant" to the target group, according to Evans (1986), who maintains that education for management is similarly instrumental. Duncan (1985) has found that while professional courses are generally flexible, regarding content, in the first year, they become increasingly tailored to the occupation concerned in terms of economic content/concepts.

This is further substantiated by reference to courses provided by the CBSI. The CBSI runs two economics courses which form part of the Associateship Examination for building society employees, these being "Economic Affairs" and "Applied Economics". Like TUC courses they are provided in conjunction with GFEs and Correspondence Colleges, and like TUC courses they are largely instrumental in their aims, despite being of much broader specification. Thus, the most important aim of the Applied Economics course according to the questionnaire response, is to enable the student to understand matters concerning his/her occupation, followed by an understanding of the workings of economies and of particular economic issues. These aims are different from those stated in the syllabus, which are: "To test a student's understanding of: (i) economic principles; (ii) the use of economic analysis for insights into various problems". (CBSI 1984). Interestingly, the Applied Economics course seems somewhat broader in respect of content than the Economic Affairs course, in which the content is much more APPARENTLY linked to housing markets. One might have assumed, in view of the course titles, that the reverse would have been the case. The content of Applied Economics, which was reviewed in greater depth than Economic Affairs, is not dissimilar to the macro part of a typical "A" level syllabus, with some microeconomics thrown in. Yet the most important concepts in the course are: Monetary and fiscal policy; the price mechanism; and the short-run and long-run, while the least important are: opportunity cost, and social costs and benefits. Of course, one must allow for the possibility that individual tutors may see the course differently from "official" policy. Also the questionnaire was completed by a non-economist who was not directly involved in the teaching of the course. Nevertheless, some doubt is cast on whether the course is, in reality, as broad as it appears on the syllabus, especially as the behavioural skills expected of students are: Knowledge of world problems, and to reason for (building) societies increasing rates etc.

Teaching methods vary from college to college, although lecturing followed by questions and answers is cited as most common. Assessment is in the form of essays.

Economics courses are provided in the context of other types of employment too, such as banking and accountancy, and a brief investigation revealed a similar picture, ie courses which are largely instrumental either in aims or content, or both. In many cases, students study on their own and are given block release two or three times a year for intensive revision. These sessions are intended to enable the maximum amount of information to be passed from tutor to student in the minimum possible time. How much of this information is understood by students is a moot point, although one suspects that students themselves regard the economics component as instrumental in getting on to higher levels of study, or to pass the examination as a whole (usually, a pass has to be attained in each individual subject), and are not interested in notions of economic literacy.

Yet even accepting the instrumentality of purpose of both the organisation and, probably, of the students themselves, one wonders whether courses in economic literacy might not better suit their purposes than the narrowly concerned courses currently available. Many commentators are expressing the need for flexibility on the part of the workforce, ie the ability to adapt to changing situations and to learn new skills.

Although this is usually expressed in the context of technology and information skills, there is no prima facie reason for supposing that subjects such as economics should be excluded from such considerations. Attainment of "the economics perspective" ought to enhance one's ability to understand the economic influences pertaining to particular fields. This is an area in which (long term) research is required. One would need to discover what the aims of economics education are from the viewpoint of various organisations, and then seek to discover whether such aims are more likely to be achieved by economic literacy courses than by the current provision.

Some work in the first area has already been undertaken (by Pittwood, 1984). A potential pitfall of such research is, of course, that the information might be used to construct "tailor-made" courses for different branches of industry, thus making economics courses even narrower than they are now. At present, courses in economics comparable in scope to "Western intellectual traditions: the divine comedy", provided by McGraw-Hill for its employees, as reported by Mackie (1983), appear to be non-existent.

It may be that students themselves, as they progress in their careers, will become aware of the need for a more broadly-based (economics) education. The BIM (1984), for example, states that: "For many years it has been traditional for the greater part of post-experience management training to be designed for organisational needs rather than individual development. Now, however, partly because of an increasingly competitive job and career environment, there is a strong and growing demand from individual managers, who wish to develop their management skill and expertise by means that are separate from, and additional to, the training provided by their employers". (p.16). A number of "managerial" organisations were investigated. While these were active in providing short courses, seminars, journals, books and other services, none provided GENERAL economics courses, thus adding weight to a criticism made by Evans that neither management nor workforce are given enough economics education. A brief summary of the organisations concerned appears in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Managerial Organisations' Activities in Economics Education

Organisation	Courses in Economics	Other Courses	Conferences /Seminars	Journals	Books
A	/ (a)	/	/ (b)	/	/
B	x	/	/ (b)	/	/
C	x	x	x	x	x
D	x	/	/ (b)	x	x
E	x	x	/ (b)	/	/
F	x	/	/ (b)	x	x

NOTES

A - Association of Business Executives. B- British Institute of Management. C - Business in the Community. D - College of Marketing. E - Confederation of British Industry. F - Dun and Bradstreet Limited. (a) - As part of business studies courses. (b) - Not on economics. (The above information is correct as far as could be ascertained).

A number of other organisations were investigated, but none was concerned with adult education as such except in certain specialised fields such as teaching. Although many of them referred in their literature to FE and continuing education, they were primarily concerned with providing students at school or college with experience and understanding of industry. Table 4 summarises the commitment of these organisations to both economics education in the sense used in this study, and adult education. It should be noted that these findings are based on reading samples of literature from the organisations, and so are somewhat subjective. The criteria used in compiling Table 4 were the extent to which the desirability of economics literacy (or similar) was expressed, the range of activities engaged in by the organisation and the amount of discussion of, or reference to, adult education in their literature.

Table 4: Other Organisations Investigated

Organisation	Commitment to Economics Education	Commitment to Adult Education
Banking Information Service	Limited to particular areas	None (a)
Careers Research & Advisory Centre	Some introductory material	Limited
Education for Industrial Society	Concerned with industry in practice	Limited
Index	As above	None
Project Trident	As above	None
School Curriculum Industry Project	As above	None (a)
Society of Education Officers (c)	High (b)	High (b)
Understanding British Industry	High (b)	High (d)
Understanding Industry	High (b)	None (a)
Young Enterprise	High (b)	None (a)

NOTES

(a) At least, not in the sense used in this study; (b) as it pertains to industry; (c) this is an interest group rather than a resources provider; (d) for teachers etc, not in the general sense used in this study.

Several government-sponsored bodies exist, but investigation showed that none came under the aegis of the present study. They, too, were very commerce-oriented and often involved funding and liaison with CFEs etc rather than direct provision. A list of these organisations and their activities appears in Table 5.

Table 5: Government-Sponsored Organisations and Their Activities

Organisation	Acronym	Principal Activities
A	BASIE	Publications (a)
B	CELP	Help colleges meet the needs of local firms
C	(ITBs)	See NIACE (1985)
D	(LCPs)	Financial Support for local employers with training needs
E	(MSC)	Training and employment policies and related activities
F	PICKUP	Assistance in providing continuing education courses
G	REPLAN	Provision of educational opportunities for the unemployed

Sources: DES October (1985b); FEU (1984); NIACE (1985).

NOTES

A - British Association for Commercial & Industrial Education. B - College-Employer Links Project. C - Industrial Training Boards. D - Local Collaborative Projects. E - Manpower Services Commission. F - Professional, Industrial & Commercial update. G - Replan. (a) - As far as could be ascertained.

Some mention ought to be made of adult education for the unemployed. Adult education responses to unemployment take a number of forms. These can be broadly classified as follows: Academic education; Personal development; Training in specific skills; Information and advice; Leisure provision. A number of organisations were investigated, and these - either independently or in co-operation with local CFEs, AEIs and/or industry - tended to provide training in specific skills or opportunities for personal development. None provided economics education, although in the country as a whole a not unusual response to unemployment is to provide courses on the reasons for unemployment, as Senior (1984) points out. The organisations investigated are listed in Table 6.

Table 6: Organisations Providing Education & Training For The Unemployed In One London Borough

Organisation	Activities
Education & Training Advice	Information and advice on learning opportunities for adults, including sources of finance
Jobmate	Kit containing advice, plus personal support
Simba Project	Drop-in centre plus leisure and training programmes. Mainly used by young black people.

Organisation	Activities
Training Services (Local Authority)	Assists local firms with various aspects of training, and helps those unemployed seeking training
Unemployed People's Alliance	Skills exchange; training schemes; information. For long term unemployment
Unemployed Workers' Centre	Mainly leisure activities/classes
Unemployment Project	Information and advice, plus advice and assistance on raising money. For 16-25 year olds

Source: Flockhart and Cottrell.

Although it was stated above that none of these organisations provided economics education, this does not necessarily mean that the unemployed in London receive no such education. First, many of these organisations ignored requests for further information; secondly, only the organisations in one London borough were considered - it may be that other London boroughs are more active in this area; finally, to obtain a truer impression of the amount of economics education received by the unemployed, one would need to examine the participation rates of the unemployed in LEA classes (this would be theoretically possible because many LEAs have a concessionary rate for the unemployed, although it is not always possible in practice to distinguish between unemployed and, eg, pensioners on the basis of enrolment fees paid!).

Although at the time of writing, the notion of "economic literacy for all school pupils" is being actively supported by both central and local government, there appears to be little support for a similar programme for adults. This is rather odd when one considers that a recent Secretary of State for Education has, at various times, supported economics education because of its supposed positive effect on attitudes to industry - a manifestation of the "good worker" argument. Is it to be supposed that adults are unlikely to benefit from greater understanding? Or do school students represent a better investment of the government's educational resources?

It is unlikely that employers will provide economics literacy courses unless such courses can be shown to be of practical benefit (to the company). Most of the courses provided by AEIs, whether independently or in co-operation with other bodies such as the TUC, are instrumental in the sense that they are a means to an end rather than an end in themselves (eg "Becoming Your Own Boss"). Thus adults who were not exposed to the "economics perspective" at school stand a good chance of not being exposed to it at all, except through independent study or informal education.

Mulkeen (1985) reports that 90% of the 1990 workforce and 75% of the 2000 workforce are already employed in the market place in the USA. If a similar situation exists for the UK, then most adults at work - or out of it - will not receive economics education even if they want to.

Economics education in prisons in London (1)

Adult education in prisons is subject to a number of pressures which are found in no other sector of education. Goldin and Thomas (1984) have enumerated these pressures as they manifest themselves in the USA. In the preliminary comments which follow, their categorisation is used, adjusted where necessary for prevailing conditions in the UK.

Figures taken from "The Economist" (1985) suggest there are about 5000 more adult male prisoners (21+) than prisons were designed to hold. This can make private study very difficult, if not impossible - not only because of the lack of space in cells but also because of the psychological pressures which overcrowding can induce. "Lifers", being housed one to a cell, are better off in this respect than other prisoners, but the constituted only about 7% of all adult male prisoners in the period May to December, 1983, as reported by the "Economist" (1985).

Security is, obviously, of paramount importance in a prison. Consequently, whenever there is a security alert there follows a total shutdown on people entering or leaving the prison, and restrictions on prisoners' movements. Thus tutors may not be able to enter the prison to get to their classes, and prisoners may be prevented from visiting the library to complete assignments. Similarly, staff absence may mean that no staff can be spared for duty in the education section, and in that case classes would be cancelled.

Goldin and Thomas (1984) cite evidence to show that keen students in prison may be subjected to verbal or physical abuse from other prisoners. Such extreme reactions are not common in the UK, although sarcasm can be a powerful deterrent to studying. A different manifestation of classroom interaction problems is the fact that tutors would be unwise to oblige prisoners who ask them to buy materials (with prisoners' money) such as briefcases, or even books. Such problems do not, of course, arise in the outside world.

Another problem associated with prison education is that of information. But provision is made in all prisons for prisoners to have an interview with the Education Officer for the purpose of educational counselling regarding courses/classes inside and outside the prison.

Perhaps more effective in making educational pursuits difficult, although unintentionally, is the way schedules are sometimes co-ordinated. Classes may conflict with other activities such as football. The drudgery of prison life is such that most potential students opt for recreational activities. Similarly, daytime education is usually paid at a lower rate than workshop activity, thus effectively fining full-time students. Another problem, arising from the prison system itself, is that students may be transferred to another prison while in the middle of a course.

In addition to the problems mentioned above is the fact that, because prisoners may have difficulties in taking the steps necessary to deal with a stressful situation, such as bad news from home, they may lack attentiveness in lessons and lose their commitment to the course.

Perhaps all of these problems can be regarded as stemming from the simple fact that the goals of adult education and those of prison administration are essentially contradictory. The former may concern intellectual freedom, while the latter is concerned with control for the sake of security. Prison structures, in the sense of routines as well as physical layout, emphasise the latter. Thus to take one example, science courses which involve the use of electronic equipment cannot be taken by prison students, for obvious reasons. The more "normal" form of adult education to be found in prisons is that which occurs in open prisons, from which prisoners may even take daytime classes at a local college.

Finally, there is the question of finance. Because of the financial cutbacks mentioned earlier, many prisons (in common with other sectors of adult education) have had to cut down their educational provision to adult basic education (ABE), examination classes, non-examinable courses which have more than 5 or 6 participants, and low-cost courses such as those of the OU, which do not involve frequent tutor-student contact.

In the UK, there are four main types of prison: (a) Local, which contain about 80% of all prisoners. Because most of their population are serving short sentences (less than a year), education takes the form of evening classes rather than daytime classes, on the whole. (b) Training prisons, for long term prisoners. (c) Dispersal prisons, for highly dangerous prisoners; contained within training prisons. And (d) open prisons. (Although there are a few specialist remand prisons, most are contained within (a), (b) and (c). But the situation is changing continually). Education in some form or other is provided in all types of prison.

The present investigation concerned 8 penal establishments in and around London. These included not only prisons but remand and youth custody centres. One of the remand centres provided economics education in the form of "A" level economics tuition for students about to take the examination, and a course based on Samuelson's book. On the whole, however, remand centres provide either remedial education or short courses (eg typing). This is because of the short duration of the prisoner's stay. There was a suggestion by one prison education officer that in the near future ALL London prisons will become remand prisons (because of the high - and growing - number of people awaiting trial), thus effectively diminishing economics provision to virtually zero.

Another London prison anticipated providing economics education after moving to a purpose-built building. At the time of writing, however, correspondence courses in economics and business studies were being followed.

In one prison, however, courses in business studies, economics and commerce were provided, largely due to the prison education officer's commitment to prison education in general, and his close co-operation with the local AEI.

A business studies course lasting for one term is offered, and attracts about 15 students. The syllabus for the course (which is not examinable) is devised by consultation between tutor and students. In practice, this means that the students accept, by and large, the syllabus presented to them by the tutor.

The most important aims of the course are to: enable the student to understand matters concerning his occupation (all students are male) and encourage the student to gain confidence in speaking and discussion. Understanding the workings of economies is a moderately important aim, but on the whole "abstract" comprehension is not emphasised. Indeed, the course is taught with a minimal amount of economic theory. Behavioural skills are thought to be difficult to verbalise and assess in the circumstances in which the course is taught.

Although described as microeconomics, the course contains very little economics at all. The 10 week syllabus covers the following topics: 1 Introduction. 2 Types of business units- how they are formed. 3 Basic marketing techniques. 4 Costings and quotations. 5 Financial records - basic bookkeeping. 6 Financial records - trading, profit and loss accounts. 7 Financial records - balance sheets. 8 Services of banks. 9 Personal taxation. 10 Savings.

The most important economics concept is the price mechanism. Opportunity cost and allocative efficiency are of moderate importance, but the other concepts mentioned on the questionnaire are of little or no importance.

Teaching methods consist of "chalk and talk" and handouts, in the context of lectures followed by question and answer sessions. Whole group discussion and case studies are also quite important, the least important methods being computer simulations, student-prepared papers, visiting speakers and educational visits. (This last is possible in open prisons). The tutor notes that because of the nature of prison teaching, the approach must be pragmatic and flexible.

The tutor of the course is employed full-time in a local CFE, and is a qualified teacher (but not in economics).

In another part of the prison, courses in economics have been offered. Before the educational cutbacks started to "bite", both term time and vacation courses were run without the need for examinations. Subsequently, however, the small numbers on the course (between 1 and 5) could only be justified by the prospect of "having something to show for it" at the end. In response to this, a course entitled "British Industrial Society" was offered, followed in the next year by "O" level Economics and "O" level Commerce.

These courses aimed at economic understanding, where possible with a "practical" slant - especially BIS. The courses suffered from the sort of problems already mentione, namely: 1 Cancelled or interrupted classes. 2 Emotional difficulties of prisoners. 3 The need to complete the syllabus in a year (for financial reasons), whereas two years would have been preferable.

Where economics education is provided in prisons, it is likely to be in the form of examination courses. It seems that most prisoners are unlikely to have great opportunities to improve their economic literacy.

Informal economics education

The opportunities for participating in informal education are potentially so vast that no single study can do more than "scratch the surface". These opportunities encompass such diverse areas as a chance conversation, purposeful independent study, membership of clubs, and of course the media, ranging from specialist books, journals and videos to ordinary newspapers and TV and radio broadcasts.

Apart from the problems of pinpointing the provision of informal education to a particular locality are the problems associated with identifying the participants. Even where figures for participation exist, as with audience ratings for TV broadcasts, how would one attempt to assess whether actual learning had taken place? Assessment of economics understanding is beset with problems even in the relatively ideal situation of formal learning; in informal education it is probably well-nigh impossible.

Nevertheless, studies by Tough as reported by Brookfield (1982), Knowles (1950) and Machlup (1962) suggest that most adult learning occurs in an informal context. It is therefore ironic that the most important area of adult education, at least in terms of the number of participants, is the one that is the least comprehensively dealt with in this study. It is to be hoped that the notes which follow will provide future researchers in economics education with an outline map of this largely uncharted territory.

The analysis which follows adopts three broad categories of investigation, these being clubs and societies, the media and autodidacticism.

It is conceivable that some clubs provide economics courses or discussion groups, or invite guest speakers along to give a one-off speech on an economics theme. Almost every one of the small sample of clubs approached reported that economics education was not provided for their members. This, however, does not necessarily mean that virtually nothing is going on in this field. Compared with the possible number of clubs or societies which might have been approached, the sample was extremely small. Moreover, to get a more accurate picture, one would need to approach individual branches (where such a structure exists) since many clubs have a federal structure whereby branches operate independently of the head office, which might, therefore, not know of all the local activities going on.

Furthermore, there are in existence very informal clubs, in which groups of people meet in each others' houses on a regular basis to discuss and debate topical issues. Such clubs often have no formal constitution, only a (tacitly) agreed procedure, with a fluid "membership", and do not advertise. Information about meetings is conveyed by word of mouth, and access to, or even knowledge of, these forums depends upon whom one knows. Occasionally, members of such clubs are members of another, and in this way networks are formed. Thus there is some resemblance to the skills exchanges which are occasionally established in areas of high unemployment, except that they are, in effect, "knowledge exchanges". Very occasionally, these are formalised into a type of club with membership fees, a constitution and so on, but for the most part they remain "underground" and therefore impossible to enumerate.

Table 7 summarises the results of this part of the study.

Many of the institutions which provided no economics education in the sense defined here did provide business education eg commerce, book-keeping, marketing and so on.

Table 7: Economics education in selected clubs and societies

Organisation	Economics Education Provided
Surbiton Co-operative Society	None
Stratford Co-operative Society	None
Co-operative College	Micro and macro courses as part of Diploma in Policy Studies (formal education)
National Federation of Community Organisations	None
Tower Hamlets Advanced Technology Training	Effects of new technology on society - costs and benefits
Tower Hamlets Training Workshop	Setting up in business
Fleet Community Education Centre	None
Montefiore Community Education Centre	None
Wessex Community Education Centre	None
City of London Dyslexia Charity	None- but other subjects such as geography, history and current affairs are
Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation	None - but correspondence and home tuition can be provided to meet any demand
Royal National Institute for the Blind	None - but other (similar) institutions may offer economics education

Organisation	Economics Education Provided
Young Men's Christian Association	None
The Pre-retirement Association	None - but can assist adults in choosing courses
Mary Fielding Guild	None
National Federation of Womens' Institutes	None
Working Men's Club and Institute Union	None
Rotary International (District 113)	No reply received
National Union of Townswomen's Guilds	No reply received
Charitable Working Ladies' Guild	None

For the sake of convenience, "media" includes books as well as newspapers, TV etc. An analysis was undertaken of the economics books published in the UK between 1983 and 1985, the results of which are set out in Table 8. A number of points need to be made:

Firstly, it was not possible to obtain sales statistics relating to economics books. No doubt individual publishers maintain records, but no central records could be located which broke down sales into categories.

Secondly, and related to this, it is not known how many of these books were purchased by public libraries, nor how many library members borrowed them (and for how long). Taken together, these two points indicate that no information has been obtained regarding the actual reading of these books.

Thirdly, the criteria used in compiling Table 8 were somewhat subjective. Only books in the Dewey classification number 330 were considered, thus ignoring business books for the most part.

Fourthly, only books likely to be of interest to adults learning economics were considered. Thus books which appeared to be either too specialised, complicated or simple were discounted. Finally, the numbers were estimated rather than individually counted. The lay-out of the source (see below) made this possible.

Table 8: Economics Books Published in the UK 1983-1985

	1983	1984	1985
Total no of economics books published	2000 (c)	2800 (c)	3000 (c)
Total no of general economics books published (a)	480 (c)	480 (c)	368 (c)
Total no of adult economics education books published (b)	51	43	60 (d)

Notes:

(a) ie 330.0. (b) ie books likely to be of use to adults learning economics; includes some school texts. (c) estimate. (d) this figure is misleading since there was an increase in the number of school texts published - see note (b) above.

Source: British National Bibliography, 1983, 1984 and 1985 (annual volumes).

Although the absolute accuracy of these figures may be open to question, there is little doubt that economics books specifically intended for adults, or which would appeal to a general adult readership, constitute only a small proportion of the total output. Adults studying economics at an AEI or on their own are faced, on the whole, with a choice between books designed for children or examination classes, or on applied economics (eg on the British economy).

The number of magazines concerning economics and related areas appears to have grown during recent years, but many of these are either specialist (eg about business or investment) or presuppose a certain level of knowledge or understanding. The most adult-oriented economics for adults in journals and magazines is, perhaps, the schools briefs published in "The Economist" from time to time.

An interesting phenomenon, however, is the extent to which economics-related material appears in non-specialist publications. A casual survey indicated, for example, that "The Plain Truth", a religious magazine, often has economics data in its pages - although not economics analysis. Similarly, local newspapers, in-house journals and others, such as "Executive Post", all feature economics material.

None of these sources, however, are adequate on their own to engender economic literacy. For the most part, the data is supported by a text which has a non-economics perspective or which doesn't clearly state alternative interpretations. Nevertheless, these types of publication can be useful sources of economics data on which adults may "practise" economics.

Data on economics broadcasting on radio is hard to obtain. BBC Radio 4 broadcasts programmes in conjunction with other bodies such as the OU and BTEC (See, for example, BTEC, 1985), as well as schools programmes which may be listened to by adults. "Analysis", a current affairs programme, often features economics issues, and attracts an average audience of 0.45 million, as indicated in Table 9 below.

BBC and Independent local radio occasionally carry reports on economic matters. Radios 1 and 2 also sometimes produce serious programmes dealing with, for example, unemployment. Because the output is so diverse, a detailed breakdown of radio programmes with an economic content does not seem to exist. However, the picture for television is somewhat clearer.

Television programmes with an economics content account for about 2% of the BBC's output, according to BBC (1985), "output" being defined in terms of broadcasting hours. For the IBA, current affairs and general factual programmes account for 21% of Channel 4's output and 10.5% of ITV's (Croston, 1985). A rough estimate suggests that programmes with an economics content account, on average, for about 4.5% of Channel 4's output and 1% of ITV's, giving an average of just under 3% of the IBA's output. Thus BBC and ITV are fairly similar in this respect.

Information was obtained about several programmes, and this is set out in Tables 9 and 10 below. Before analysing this data, some explanation of terms and survey methods would be useful.

Research on television viewing is undertaken by the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB) and Audits of Great Britain (AGB). A sample of about 3000 homes constitutes a panel which is representative of all UK private households with a TV set. The viewing habits and preferences of the panel is used as a basis from which to infer those of the total TV population.

The technical terms used may be explained by reference to the following extract from Table 9.

Programme	TVR	TVR(L)	Adults	Men	Women	AI	Ave AI	CAI
The Money Programme	6	6	6	7	5	76	77	80

"TVR" refers to Television Rating, which is the percentage of the group under consideration which had their TV tuned to that programme during the time period under consideration. Thus "TVR:6" means that 6% of UK homes with a TV set were watching the Money Programme at that particular time. "TVR(L)" gives the figure for London homes.

The figures for adults, men and women are also TVRs, this time for individuals rather than homes. All of these figures are for London. Thus 6% of adults in London with a TV in their home watched the Money Programme; 7% of men watched it; and 5% of women. (The sex composition of the audience itself is presented in Table 10).

"AI" denotes the Appreciation Index. Panel members rate their preferences by allocating points to programmes on a six-point scale, where 1 = lowest. These numbers are then summated and expressed as an index number. Taken on its own, the AI has little meaning. Used in conjunction with other AIs, however, it yields more information. In the example above, the average AI for the category into which the Money Programme falls (Documentary) was 77, while for the Money Programme itself it was 76. In other words, the Money Programme was slightly less popular than other programmes of a similar nature on BBC2 - at least on this particular occasion.

Another reference point is the CAI (Channel AI). This is the AI for that particular channel - in this case BBC2 - which in this case is 80. This tells us that the Money Programme is not as popular as the "average" BBC2 programme (music, sports, drama, etc). This information could, of course, be derived from audience figures for all BBC2 programmes, but the AI figures are appreciably less cumbersome.

"Adults" are persons over 16 years of age. The sources of the statistics quoted in the following tables give breakdowns by age group, but this level of detail was felt to be unnecessary for the present study.

It should be noted that the data relates only to particular time periods; in the case of Table 9, just one week, since the data for a longer period for the programmes dealt with had not yet been collated. Moreover, because the time period covered in each table is different from that of the others, the statistics are not directly comparable. The statistics should, therefore, be regarded as illustrative.

Table 9

Audience-related statistics for selected economics/business programmes: Week ending 27th April, 1986 (2)

Programme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Economics (M) (a)	2	45	0 (c)	0 (c)	0 (c)	-	-	- (d)	-	-
Economics (F) (b)	2	110	0 (c)	0 (c)	0 (c)	-	-	-	-	-
Money Programme	2	2527	5	6	6	7	5	76	77	80
Weekend World	3	1084	2	3	2	2	2	80	75	75
Marketing Mix	4	944	2	2	2	2	2	- (d)	-	-
Pocket Money Programme	4	313	1	1	1	1	1	- (d)	-	-
Business Programme	4	489	1	1	1	1	1	- (d)	-	-
4 What It's Worth	4	2791	5	5	6	5	7	77	77	79

1 - Channel, 2 - Audience (e) (000s), 3 - TVR (general), 4 - TVR (London), 5 - Adults, 6 - Men, 7 - Women, 8 - AI, 9 - Ave AI (75 represents "Current Affairs"; 77 represents "Documentary"), 10 - CAI.

Notes:

(a) M = Monday broadcast, (b) F = Friday broadcast, (c) 0 = Less than about 300,000 viewers, (d) AI not able to be reliably calculated because of low audience size, (e) Viewing figures for UK.

Additional Information:

There are 8.7 million adults in London with TVs in their homes. Of these, approximately 4 million are men and 4.6 million are women. In terms of socio-economic classification, 46% are in groups A, B and C1; 23% are in group C2; 31% are in groups D and E.

Source: BARB/AGB

When attempting to interpret these statistics, account must be taken of transmission times. "Economics: A Question of Choice" was transmitted during weekday mornings, and in any event was billed as a schools programme. Furthermore, we have no knowledge of the extent to which programmes are video-taped in order to be viewed at another time. Finally, "The Marketing Mix", like Peter Donaldson's "A Question of Economics", forms the basis of a BTEC/NEC course and is backed by other materials. Thus the viewing figures on their own do not necessarily inform us as to how many people eventually saw the programme (s).

In terms of audience size, the three most popular programmes are: 4 What It's Worth, The Money Programme and Weekend World.

A more useful comparison, however, is between the AIs for these programmes and the AI for the relevant category. On this basis we see that Weekend World is appreciably more popular than other similar programmes - or, at least it was on this occasion. Weekend World is not solely concerned with economics issues. In order to test the popularity of economics coverage in this programme, one would need to know the dates of the transmission of such programmes and examine the data for those particular weeks. Of the three programmes above, only the Money Programme is "sophisticated" in terms of economic analysis (and even so is mostly concerned with business and finance, and not "economic literacy" as such), and perhaps it is significant that it is slightly less popular than other programmes in the same category ("Documentaries").

By comparison, the Business Programme, which is intended as an alternative to the Money Programme, and The Marketing Mix are not very popular, either in terms of viewing figures or of AIs. Is this because the titles of the programme sound uninteresting to the non-initiated? It is not unusual, for example, for courses in AEIs to increase dramatically in popularity (or the reverse) simply as a result of a change in the course title. Or is it, perhaps, that the Money Programme enjoys a sort of "brand loyalty" which other programmes have not yet been able to build up?

In any event, the audience size of these programmes is miniscule by comparison with, say, "That's Life", which enjoys an audience of nearly 13 million viewers. Thus it would seem that economics education in any form is a minority interest when it is the raison-d'être of the programme. "That's Life" includes consumer education. Perhaps, therefore, the only way to introduce a large number of people to economics education would be indirectly, ie to include it in other programmes of more general appeal.

An interesting aspect of Table 9 is that a higher proportion of men watch the Money Programme, while a higher proportion of women watch 4 What It's Worth, a consumer affairs programme. It would be interesting to learn why this is so, and the effects of it on children in the home; is economics perceived as a male preserve and, if so, does television bear any responsibility for reinforcing or changing this perception?

Table 10 yields additional information about some of the programmes considered above. Generally speaking, it can be seen that the Money Programme, The Business Programme and Union World appeal, by and large, to older middle class men. An interesting revelation is that the average number of programmes seen by viewers is rather low, suggesting that there is little audience loyalty, possibly because programmes fail to inspire viewers to "tune in" regularly, or because alternative viewing seems potentially more entertaining. Again, we do not know how many viewers record the programmes for use at a later date.

Nevertheless, these statistics suggest why economics/business programmes are of relatively minor interest. Fundamentally, it would seem that they are regarded as being informative rather than "entertaining", and perceived as being of interest to only certain types of people. One would hope that by considering what economics is, the apparent conflict between information and entertainment could be reconciled. In so doing, economics education would be placed within reach of a larger number of people, should this be thought to be desirable.

Independent learning (autodidactism) and economics education

Independent learning may be defined as learning which occurs when all aspects of it are in the hands of the learner.

Table 10: Selected Television and Radio Programmes related to Industry/Business (3)

Programme Time + Dates	Channel/ Station	No. of progs covered in series	Average audience (million)	Average A.I./ R.I.*	Total Reach (million)	Av. No. progs seen in series	% of Audience in each group								
							Men	Women	16-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE
							(% in UK population)								
							39	42	29	24	28	39	32	29
THE MONEY PROGRAMME Sun. 18.30-19.15 29/9/85-present	BBC-2	12	2.7	78	20	3	47	43	24	33	33	42	32	26
RECOVERY Tues. 23.25-23.45 9/7/85-6/8/85	BBC-1	5	2.1	71	9	1	49	47	29	37	30	32	34	34
COMMERCIAL BREAKS Fri. 21.30-22.00 12/7/85-9/8/85	BBC-2	5	1.7	70	8	1	41	50	17	26	48	40	25	35
MICRO LIVE Fri. 19.00-19.30 11/10/85-13/12/85	BBC-2	10	1.4	73	11	2	43	37	24	29	27	37	35	28
THE BUSINESS PROGRAMME Sun. 17.15-18.00 13/10/85-15/12/85	C4	10	0.7	-	12	2	48	41	26	32	31	42	34	24
UNION WORLD 19.20-20.00 28/9/85-26/10/85	C4	5	0.5	-	2	1	45	47	27	23	42	44	24	32
ANALYSIS: THE PACE OF CHANGE Wed. 20.15-21.00 Thurs. 11.00-11.45 21/1/86-12/2/86	R4	4	0.45	83										

SOURCE: BARB/AGB, BBC/ARS

* A.I: Appreciation Index = 0 - 100 (Television)
R.I: Reaction Index = 0 - 100 (Radio)

Unlike other forms of learning, provision of and participation in independent learning are synonymous, since learners themselves provide the main elements of the learning procedures. Thus the only way of obtaining information about independent adult learning of economics would be to interview a random (or stratified random) sample of adults. Nevertheless, it is possible to put forward suggestions about the nature (but not the extent) of independent economics learning by examining the findings of more generalised research.

Studies by Tough and others indicate that independent learning accounts for between two thirds and four fifths of all adult learning. In other words, adult education at AEIs appears to be favoured by only a minority of adults. Indeed, adult education has been referred to by Brookfield (1981) as an iceberg, ie most of it is "submerged".

There are, however, some problems arising from the research. Most of it has been conducted with small samples, and only a few have been concerned with the learning habits of what we might call, for want of a better term, the "average" person in terms of employment or educational attainment - most has concerned professionals and/or graduates, whom one imagines would be more favourably disposed to self-teaching. Furthermore, relatively few studies have been undertaken in the UK, most of the research findings pertaining to North America. How far they hold true in this country is largely unknown. Studies by Strong (1977) and Brookfield (1981), both cited by Brookfield (1982), bear out the findings obtained elsewhere, but, again, the samples were neither large nor random.

If, for the sake of argument, we accept the overall impression that a large number (and proportion) of adults engage in self-teaching, the question that arises is why, when they could enrol at an AEI or CFE instead and obtain expert guidance? Conventional wisdom would suggest negative reasons such as distance or cost, but the research findings, such as they are, do not bear out this view. More positive factors come into play, such as the desire to be self-educated, flexible, and to acquire specific knowledge - often in response to a work situation such as being asked to write a report. Occasionally it is to find out more about the subject of a TV or radio broadcast, especially if there is a time lag, as of course there usually will be, between the broadcast and the establishment of a relevant course at an AEI.

Although the independent adult learner is "in charge" of the learning process, he/she does not necessarily remain completely self-reliant throughout the duration of a learning project (defined as lasting at least 8 hours). Friends and family may be used, and to a lesser extent other services such as librarians, although as Porter (1980) makes clear, museums (for example) have a part to play in the education of adults (and, of course, children).

What sort of economics is likely to be sought by the independent learner? McCatty (1973), cited in Brookfield (1982), found that the main reason for choosing self-study was for highly specific subject matter: "The adult wished to learn how to change a fuse, not the causes of electricity". (Brookfield, 1982 p.15).

If this is generally applicable, it implies that the kind of economics education sought by the adult self-teacher is likely to be very specific and immediately practical. This interpretation is to some extent corroborated by the fact, reported above, that most adult economics courses, even GCE courses, are taught with the minimum use of technical terminology, especially where students are consulted about the nature of the course.

Two challenges therefore arise. Firstly, can economics be made "practical"? The work of the Economic Association's 14-16 Project would suggest that it can. Secondly, given what has already been said about books on economics, what resources are available to the adult self-teacher? The answer is very little which is both "down to earth". At present, it is likely that even the genuinely interested potential adult learner is likely to be thwarted in the attempt to learn economics of the kind spoken about here. It is important to realise that the resources considered in the latter part of this section are not independent of each other. The sort of books and radio and TV programmes available are likely to influence both the desire for and the ability to achieve an "economics perspective".

Notes

(1) The term "prisons" is used as shorthand for prisons, remand centres and youth custody centres which, for the purposes of this study, may be regarded as penal institutions. Permission to include this section was granted by the Chief Education Officer's Branch of the Prison Service, from whom permission must be sought to reproduce these findings elsewhere.

(2) I am indebted to Daniel Cave of Thames TV for permission to consult BARB/AGB documents, to Tessa Beadle of Thames for her assistance and guidance in extracting the desired information, and to Andrew Floyd, Marketing Services Manager, Thames TV for permission to reproduce the statistics here. These statistics are highly confidential, and Tables 9 and 10 are presented here on the understanding that copyright remains with BARB/AGB.

(3) I am indebted to Andrew Hemming, BBC, for these statistics and permission to reproduce them here. Copyright remains with BARB/AGB.

8: Conclusions

Three main facets of this study may be identified for the purposes of this discussion, these being procedural, substantive and the areas in which further research is required.

With the benefit of hindsight it is possible to say that the most efficient means of acquiring the information is to contact individual institutions directly rather than make enquiries of the LEA, for reasons outlined earlier. However, the original approach did have the advantage of revealing gaps in information on a scale which might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Ways in which this situation might be rectified are discussed below.

The framework adopted for the study of economics education for adults did indeed prove to be a useful one, although in practice it was not always easy to categorise certain types of provision. For example co-operative education was envisaged as belonging to the class "nonformal education", whereas in reality it was mostly "informal" and partly "formal", according to the definitions of these terms adopted. Nevertheless, the methodology used enabled examples from each category to be investigated without fear of completely omitting one whole category inadvertently.

Originally, the questionnaire was intended to be used as a basis from which to select interviewees, but in the event few interviews were conducted. This was mainly because of the logistic difficulties involved in contacting, and attempting to make arrangements to meet, part-time tutors who are able to be reached during only two hours per week. From this point of view, questionnaires are a more efficient method than interviews for gaining information from tutors in AEI's, notwithstanding the relative advantages and disadvantages of each in principle. As far as Heads Of Departments (HODS) and principals are concerned, however, requests for an interview are more likely to be favourably received than are questionnaires, since interviews appear to involve less effort and to be less time consuming. But much depends on the stage of the academic year in which the request is received.

The questionnaire used was wide ranging, and this enabled a substantial amount of information to be collected. It was however, criticised by one or two respondents as being too long. In fact, because of the preponderance of closed questions, fifteen to twenty minutes was ample time for the questionnaire's completion. However, the response rate to the questionnaire was a very respectable 59%, and the information obtained could be used as a basis for drawing up working assumptions (outlined below) in any future research, despite the non-random nature of the sample. Rather than simply replicating this study on a larger scale, it may be a more efficient use of resources to devise questionnaires or interviews which would clarify the ambiguities described earlier, such as "availability" of AVA and "consultation/negotiation" between tutors and students. It would also be useful, though difficult, to obtain information about the characteristics of the people who did not respond.

Since most of the questions relating specifically to economics education yielded comprehensive information, they may be regarded as useful (notwithstanding the ambiguities mentioned earlier). Perhaps the weakest question was Q22: "What behavioural skills, if any, do you expect students to acquire by the end of the course?" Some tutors were not sure what the question meant, and this may account for the vague answers it elicited. It might have been better to ask, more simple, "What do you expect students to be able to do by the end of the course?", perhaps following this by: "And how will you know whether they can do it?"

Taking an overall view of the procedure used for obtaining information about formal couses, a two or three stage approach might be more useful for obtaining a random sample and for eliciting a higher response rate:

Stage 1: Send a brief questionnaire to a random sample of CFEs and AEIs to find out which areas teach courses in economics or related subjects. This would be sent to the administrative staffs or HODs.

Stage 2: Send a second questionnaire to a random sample of the CFEs and AEIs which offer relevant courses. This questionnaire would be concerned only with the economics educational aspects of the courses, the factual information having been obtained from the first questionnaire, and would be sent to tutors.

Stage 3 (if required): Interview a random sample of, or the most interesting respondents to the second questionnaire, in order to obtain a greater depth of knowledge and to clarify any ambiguities arising from the questionnaire (bearing in mind some of the practical difficulties of arranging interviews mentioned earlier).

Such a procedure would have the advantage of using shorter questionnaires to be completed by different people (in most cases). It would also yield more representative data. Unfortunately it would also provide more opportunities for "default" on the part of potential respondents.

The procedure used in this study for gaining information in the fields of nonformal and informal economics education represented a "macro" approach by which head offices etc were contacted. This produced negative results, by and large, which whilst providing data on the limited extent of economics education in these areas, tells us nothing about its nature. A more fruitful approach in this respect would probably be to contact local branches of clubs and societies, individual employers and trade unions and so forth.

Although the procedures could be improved, the study yielded interesting findings. These point the way to further research.

On a theoretical level, it would appear that the theory of andragogy is little more than a catalogue of what any "good" teacher should be doing anyway, whether in adult or school education. The so-called pedagogical model with which andragogy is often favourably compared is almost certainly not as prevalent as the protagonists of andragogy appear to believe. The most novel aspect of andragogy is the idea that the learner should, ultimately, take responsibility for his/her own learning - although "the learner" does not necessarily have to be an adult - and this is the meaning ascribed to andragogy in the remainder of this discussion. This raises another issue, which was tentatively suggested above and apparently corroborated by the research: that there may be a conflict between the freedom of the learner envisaged in the andragogical model and the need to teach the concepts and procedures of particular disciplines such as economics.

The study revealed that the more "andragogical" the course aims and objectives, the less "economic" they appeared to be (although there did not appear to be a very strong connection between aims and methods in the former case). There are two possibilities here: either there is a conflict of principle, or it is a matter of tutors requiring more training in the principles and techniques of teaching adults.

As far as the matter of principle is concerned, there is a tendency to think in "black and white" terms - either adult learners should have complete freedom to learn what they want to, or they should be taught what the tutor feels they need to learn. This may indeed be a fairly accurate portrayal of the real situation when one considers that most AEI courses are only one or two terms in length. But in principle it is possible, by adopting a longer time scale, to imagine a progression from a didactic to an andragogical approach in the classroom, as students become more knowledgeable about the subject. To put this another way, there is no conflict between learning the rules of grammar and having the freedom of self-expression. Indeed, a lack of knowledge about these rules leads to inarticulateness and thereby PREVENTS freedom of expression. Similarly there ought to be no conflict between learning the economist's procedures through the Hodkinson-Thomas framework, and the freedom to explore issues of one's own choosing from various viewpoints (Keynesian, Marxist etc), as long as organisational considerations are conducive to these objectives.

In practical terms, two major changes are required to bring about a synthesis - as opposed to a mere compromise - of the aims of andragogy and those of economics education.

Firstly, adults should have the option of progressing in their economics education. At present, an adult who has completed a basic course at an AEI can really only progress, in formal terms, by taking an examinable course. Most AEIs run progressive courses in languages, and some do the same in astrology. Were there also to be provision of say, "Beginners", "Intermediate" and "Advanced" economics at AEIs, the progression from didactic to andragogical methods would be facilitated.

The second change concerns INSET. As in schools, adult INSET is voluntary, but given that tutors do not need to be qualified teachers there is a prima facie case for making attendance at INSET courses a condition of service. This would also place the onus on the LEA or AEI to provide suitable courses. Many tutors in this survey had attended economics INSET COURSES, but few had attended adult INSET courses, and no provision of adult economics INSET had been made (as far as could be ascertained). The fact that a body of knowledge and understanding in the field of adult economics education has yet to be established is not a sufficient reason for the lack of INSET. There would be much to be gained from INSET courses which provided a forum in which tutors could meet and exchange ideas, if only in the sense of providing a much needed support system for the part-time tutor.

So far, the discussion has been concerned with the ways of marrying the principles of andragogy and those of economics. An equally important requirement is for improved information about the courses available. Mention has already been made of the difficulties encountered in obtaining details of the courses. If each LEA produced comprehensive guides for their areas, the problem would be greatly reduced. Even so, difficulties would remain as far as cancelled or extended courses are concerned.

A supplementary method would be to store the information on computer, with access provided in, say, public libraries. Some LEAs would be technically able to put this into effect immediately, while others would require a certain amount of capital expenditure to do so. The running costs of such a system would be minimal and it would be easy to keep up to date. In the short-term each LEA could be expected to operate such a system independently of others, but in the longer term one would hope to see a more comprehensive arrangement covering the whole country.

The main point of such an arrangement would not be to assist researchers, although it undoubtedly would. Primarily the aim would be to assist the consumer or would-be consumer of adult economics education. At present one wonders how many adults simply give up the search for a course, given the difficulties of obtaining information in some areas.

Turning now to the teaching methods used on the courses, it is interesting to note the bias towards "traditionalism" either in the format of lessons, or in the use of audio-visual aids. Indeed, one wonders if in many cases the video is merely a "high tech" version of chalk and talk.

The traditionalism encountered in this study probably reflects two factors. First, the instruments used to probe the situation were somewhat blunt; ideally, classes should be observed in order to obtain a more accurate picture. Second, few tutors had received specific training in adult education, although this in itself would not provide an explanation. Perhaps the institutions themselves, particularly CFEs, encourage a state of innovatory inertia.

The use of television or video as an integral part of a course is an interesting development which merits some comments here. Video (or film) can give the student access to information in the form of vicarious experience which is not possible in quite the same way with other media. There are, however, at least three considerations which need to be taken into account when using video or film:

First, there is the time necessary for preparation, screening and follow-up. Jones (1984) maintains that the viewing session should be five times as long as the actual programme.

Second, a general purpose film is probably not as useful as a "tailor-made" one.

Third, the power of television in promoting certain "images" means that it requires a high degree of "television literacy" to understand how these images are generated and to envisage alternative interpretations of the material.

How far these considerations are taken into account by tutors on adult economics courses is unknown. Equally unknown is the effect on learning of video presentation compared to film. According to Jones, (1984) film, being a wide-screen medium, is preferred by people with high self-esteem, while the opposite is true of video. If there is any significance in this, it may be that students may respond to video or film in ways that are not related to actual content (this possibility is also raised by the third point above).

This study simply attempted to gain some idea of the extent to which video etc is used, rather than how it is used ie it was quantitative rather than qualitative. Thus there is scope here for further research, which is the subject of the following section.

Knowledge of adult economics education needs to be both extended and deepened. This study has revealed something of the breadth of provision, particularly in London, where there is a wide variation in the provision between different LEAs. When examinable courses are excluded from the picture, the landscape appears very stark indeed. The first research need is to discover whether this situation is unique to London, or whether it is true of the whole country.

We also need to know more about the provision in the nonformal and informal sectors, especially autodidacticism. Generally speaking, adults who enrol on formal courses are in the minority compared with those who choose to teach themselves. Is this true of economics education in particular? This brings us into the realm of participation, more of which later.

Apart from the extent of provision, we also need to find out more about its qualitative aspects. At the most fundamental level this would involve class observation and interviews to substantiate (or disprove) some of the findings reported here. At a more sophisticated level, courses might be evaluated to determine whether their aims and objectives are being met. Especially useful in this context would be GCE courses and courses in Community Schools, both of which are alternative forms of provision not primarily directed to adult needs.

It may be useful to make certain "working assumptions" on the basis of the present study, to guide future research. Alternatively, they could be regarded as hypotheses which ought to be tested. These assumptions are: (a) economics in AEIs is mainly macro; (b) course aims are usually couched in economic terms, but ... (c) there seems to be little idea of what students should be able to do by the end of the course; (d) there appears to be little consensus about the most important concepts; (e) teaching and assessment methods are fairly "traditional", although less so in AEIs than in CFEs; and (f) most tutors are inadequately trained for teaching adults.

Lee (1985) has proposed a two-phase project for broadening adult economic literacy. Phase I would be concerned with data-gathering and making recommendations for the future. Phase II would involve the production and trialling of materials. While Lee has been influential in stimulating the Economics Association to establish an Adult Economic Literacy Working Party which is attempting to gain funding for Phase I, this does not quite go far enough.

Phase I needs to be broader than Lee suggests in that it ought to concern itself with participation as well as provision. Participation is, as it were, the "other side of the coin", and we need to know why adults choose to study economics, why they choose particular methods of doing so, and what they learn as a result. For example, does having greater experience of economic and financial matters act as a hindrance or a help? At a more fundamental level, what are the psychological factors involved in learning economics at adult level, and how far are these able to be facilitated by the application of andragogical principles? Is it possible to become economically literate on one's own or through the media - or do these (and other) modes of learning merely serve to reinforce misconceptions and prejudices?

This line of thought naturally leads on to consideration of attitudes. Do adults' attitudes change as a result of studying economics, and, if so, in what directions? We might also ask whether there is any long-term retention of attitude change as a result of studying a two or two-and-a-half term course (in some cases less).

It may even be necessary to explore the meaning of "economic literacy" when applied to adults. An implicit assumption of the present study has been that economic literacy is the same for adults as it is for children. But perhaps adult economic literacy is different, in which case what would we expect adults to be able to do that we would not demand from children? (And in this context, when does a child become an adult?)

All of these questions represent ways in which Phase I could be broadened. Another way in which such a project could be broadened is by establishing economic literacy courses in AEIs, especially in areas where this type of provision is deficient. Also, provision could be encouraged in nonformal and informal contexts.

Finally, as in the 14 to 16 Project, materials and details of teaching methods could be disseminated on a wider scale.

Returning to Lee, this study has highlighted the need to explore further some of his suggestions for Phase I. In particular, deficiencies in provision, and attitudes of the relevant parties (especially in work-based institutions) need greater investigation.

As knowledge of adult economic education expands, a body such as the Economics Association would be well-placed to act in an advisory capacity in a wide variety of contexts: for example, in the production of TV programmes and accompanying study guides, in business and in clubs and societies. In other words, there would be no reason in principle to limit activities to the formal education sector.

It is to be hoped that, with economics education for 14-16 year olds appearing to have gained a momentum of its own, more and more energy will be devoted to the extensive, diverse and largely unknown area of adult education. For detailed Tables of responses to the questionnaire, please write to the author at 38 Bush Court, Shepherd's Bush Green, London W12 8PJ. This Research Paper is a summary of an M.A. dissertation of the same title submitted to the University of London Institute of Education in 1986.

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